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COLLECTED WORKS

OF

W. J. FOX.

VOL. II.

CHRIST AND CHRISTIANITY.

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CHRIST AND CHRISTIANITY:

Forty Sermons

ON THE

MISSION, CHARACTER, AND DOCTRINES

OF

JESUS OF NAZARETH.

FIRST PUBLISHED IN 1831, *IN TWO VOLUMES.*

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THE

COLLECTED WORKS OF W. J. FOX.

CHRIST AND CHRISTIANITY:

SERMONS ON THE MISSION, CHARACTER, AND DOCTRINE OF JESUS OF NAZARETH.

[1831.]

PREFACE.

THE design of the author, in the following discourses, was not to present a complete commentary on the history of Christ,—for that object the form of an Exposition upon a Harmony of the Gospels would have been more appropriate and convenient; nor to discuss points of chronology and criticism, for these should be but sparingly introduced into pulpit addresses; nor to exhibit a system of doctrinal theology, for he holds that Christianity is not, and that Christ did not preach, a system of theological doctrines; but his aim was to display the spirit of the gospel as illustrated by, and identified with, the character and ministry of its Founder. The selection and arrangement of the discourses (which were not written as a series, nor, except in two or three instances, with any thought of publication) will, it is hoped, be found not altogether unapt for the accomplishment of this purpose. The author's views of the gospel dispensation will be best learned from the sermons themselves. He would have preferred advancing those views without any admixture of controversy, or any notice of what he deems erroneous opinions; but the exclusion of what there is of this description could not have been effected without more inconvenience than will probably arise from its being retained.

Should the present publication meet with sufficient attention to encourage him to proceed, it is the author's purpose that it should be speedily followed by another, of about the same extent, on "The Apostles and their Preaching;" and ultimately to complete his plan by a series of discourses on "The Holy Scriptures, their

History, Theology, Morality, Poetry, and Philosophy." While the limits within which it seemed expedient at present to confine himself have necessarily excluded many topics which would not else have been passed over, and the introduction of which the reader may have expected, some are omitted only because a more appropriate place will be found for them in one or other of the projected publications.

Imperfections will doubtless be detected in these volumes; of many the author is sufficiently aware; but he is less anxious to obtain the applause or to bespeak the candour of his readers for himself, than to win their sympathy in his subject. His desire is, by these and by any further efforts for which a gracious Providence may strengthen him, to recommend religion to mankind, not as consisting in mysterious or barren propositions, arbitrary enactments, blind servility, and sectarian exclusiveness, but as a plan of rational instruction and moral improvement, with love for its vital principle, and universal happiness for its final result. Should the divine blessing enable him to do this efficiently, it will be to him an "exceeding great reward."

Stamford Grove, Upper Clapton,
January 1831.

Sermon I.—Christ the Desire of all Nations.

"And the desire of all nations shall come" (Haggai ii. 7).

IT is not my present purpose to treat of this passage as part of a prediction, to ascertain the date of its delivery, and show the fact of its accomplishment,—a view in which it might lead to a variety of interesting considerations,—but to direct your attention to a character of the gospel revelation suggested by it, and which has perhaps a yet more ample portion of importance and of interest. By the description of Christ as the desire of all nations, we are naturally led to observe to what an extent something like Christianity was needed and sought after by the world; how in their religious speculations and inventions they had been feeling after God, if haply they might find him; how completely suited revelation was to their mental and moral condition; and how justly it may be described as a divine supply for the common wants of humanity. This is particularly the case if we regard the religion as identified with its founder; as, if we may so speak, incarnate in his person: the word of divine truth and wisdom made flesh to dwell amongst us. And Christ was Chris-

tianity. His generous heart was the love which is its essential and vital principle; his spotless and active life, its pure and beneficent morality; and his filial piety to God, its elevated and spiritual devotion. He it was, in the sense I am about to illustrate, that the world wanted, that the world craved for; and he is the desire of all nations. I do not mean with an expectation so enlightened even as that with which, under all their mistakes, the tribes of Israel looked for their promised deliverer; still less a feeling to be compared with that of wise and holy men, who were waiting for the great redemption; but a state of mind which, however blind and wandering in itself, however indistinct in its conceptions, however erring and sometimes guilty in its aims and progress,—yet showed the strong and universal and irrepressible tendencies of our nature towards that condition which, by the gift of Christ the Saviour, God has made in part our present possession, and in full our future heritage. I shall endeavour to show how it was that all nations evinced their desires, and how it is that in him those desires are met and gratified.

1. Truth, and especially truth in religion, has ever been an object of earnest desire to all nations; and Christ was Truth.

In what reverence did antiquity hold its wise men: how attentively were their sayings listened to, how carefully regarded, and how widely disseminated! A single aphorism has sometimes made a name imperishable. How commonly was superior knowledge, with a sort of idolatrous gratitude, ascribed to inspiration; and how often was the philosopher, the priest, the legislator, elevated to the rank of a deity! How eagerly did the timid brave the terrors, and the enlightened submit to the mummeries, of initiation into the mysteries of Egypt and of Greece, that they might look on the hidden light of truth, so imposingly veiled from the vulgar gaze! What penances and probations did the disciples of Pythagoras and others endure to arrive at the arcana of their masters' science! Regions the most remote were traversed to hold communication with the dwellers in temples or in caverns, who were supposed to be the depositaries of ancient traditions. The entrails of animals, and the flight of birds, and the stars of heaven, were questioned, in the hope of a response that would tell some-

thing of the world of invisibility or of futurity. Ear, eye, and heart were ever ready for superstition with her crafty oracles, and magic with her unholy arts. And the lowest and most besotted forms of intellect had these intense cravings in common with the clearest and the strongest; and the best philosophy of the ancient world, as personified in Socrates, wished for some heavenly teacher to come and unfold truth.

And Christ came and taught the truth. It was in the most impressive form: he stood, a man among his fellow-men, telling what he had learned of God. It was in the most simple form: he used the language of common life; and instead of the warning which banished the uninitiated, his inviting proclamation was, "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear." It was in the most affecting and influential form,—the precept, the maxim, and the parable,—fixing itself in the memory, and opening all the springs of emotion in the heart. It was in the most useful and exciting form: demanding no prostration of the intellect, nor fixing any impassable boundaries for its exertions, but appealing to reason, and stimulating reason to new efforts, to free and full exercise, to rapid and illimitable progress. The world was in darkness, and here was the light it needed. How could the relief be more adapted to the evil? They have a perfect correspondence; they are mutual counterparts,—the world's ignorance and Christ's instruction.

2. Assurance of divine mercy was a need which the common consciousness of guilt had generated; and Christ came on a mission of grace, the messenger of God's forgiveness to the repentant sinner.

How fearfully did the apprehension of divine anger lower over the ancient world! There was the cloud of the deluge, but not the rainbow. There was the temptation that beguiled, and the curse that thundered, but not the promise of the seed of the woman that should bruise the serpent's head. The prevalent custom of sacrifice is an impressive testimony of the prevalent and agonising consciousness of transgression. Fear, in conformity with its nature, became cruel. Suffering was inflicted in the hope that thereby punishment would be averted. Guilt sought to expiate the magnitude of its offence by the dignity of its victim. Man's terror raised the altar on which his

fellow-man was to be immolated to appease heaven's wrath. Even the father sank in the sinner; and the wretches offered their children to the demons they adored.

It is true that this terror shows most unworthy and degraded conceptions of the Divine character. That circumstance confirms the purpose for which I advert to these facts. It shows the extent of the apprehension generated by transgression, and the necessity for its alleviation. The consciousness of guilt not only prompted the unnatural sacrifice, but first robed in deadly terror the deities who were thus to be placated. Fear first made the gods, and then prescribed the victims; and guilt made the fear. Oh, the groan of bitter anguish and bitterer anticipation which echoed from land to land; and the trembling question, "What must I do to be saved?" Did not man want to know that the Deity had a father's heart, a father's love, a father's pity and compassion? Was it not the desire of all nations that to "repentance" there should be the gospel addition of "the remission of sins"? Was there not, in all their offerings and immolations, a groping after that perfect sacrifice, the self-devotion of Christ to an arduous life and an ignominious death, that the boundless mercy and free grace of God might be proclaimed to every penitent transgressor that walked the earth? Here was what they vainly sought in ceremony and in blood. Here was the satisfaction of doubt, the removal of fear, the subjugation of vice; where sin had abounded, grace superabounding; God reconciling the world unto himself, and teaching us freely to forgive by the glorious lesson of his mercy.

3. By the sinless purity of his character, Christ met and gratified longings after goodness and excellence so widely diffused as to have been deemed instinctive in the human heart.

The principle of love, the sense of moral beauty, are not less deeply rooted in our constitution, nor have they been less active, than the less noble, the debasing passion of fear. Tradition, poetry, mythology, philosophy, are all rich in aspirations after something far purer, lovelier, brighter, than the world has ever seen. The feeling might be traced in a thousand intermediate forms, through the immense gradation from barbarian fictions of a golden age

of innocence, to the lofty dreams, and unearthly reveries, and shadowings forth of spiritual perfection, in the mystical philosophy of Plato. All fiction tells this truth, that humanity has the wish and the want for something above its present moral condition; and that while it is of the earth earthy, it aspires to be, and would now see and love, that which is as are the angels of God in heaven. Hence tales of long-past ages before the world grew corrupt, when all was infantine simplicity and innocence; and of coming ages, when goodness shall reappear and elevate the race perhaps to earthly immortality. Hence contemporaneous fictions of happy valleys and blessed islands, far in the west, where the sun shone benignantly after traversing a guilty and a troublous world. Hence the characters in whose conception romance and poetry delight, with all their godlike attributes. They are the prayer of the universal human heart to nature and to God, to show us, though it be but for once, the blessed sight of humanity in its best estate, free from guilt, from weakness, from impurity, from selfishness; without stain, spot, or soil; the softened but unclouded reflection of its pure and holy Creator. And God granted the prayer in Jesus of Nazareth. There was the purity of infancy with the full development of maturity. There was tenderness without weakness, and energy without harshness. He benevolently consorted with the vilest, while his goodness shamed the righteousness of the severest. He was in the house of feasting and in the house of mourning, and the heart reverenced and blessed him in them both. He was in the bosom of his Father and unfolded the truths of heaven and the mysteries of eternity, and the while his eye rested in love and gladness on the sparrow's wing and the lily's blossom. He wrought miracles and wiped away tears. He was not of the world—that world which he lived and died to redeem. By his side on the couch at the last paschal supper, by the foot of his cross as he was expiring, his eye and heart rested on "the beloved disciple;" that heart whose universal benevolence so identified him with humanity that he was one with the whole human race, who all live in him as they died in their first progenitor: "for as by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead;" and "as in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive."

4. Man has always coveted the exhibition of power, physical and moral. His dreams have ever been of might, majesty, and dominion, of a loftier kind than nature shows or history records. The capacity of admiration within him has craved for an object which should fix and fill it, or rather enlarge and overwhelm it, by its surpassing grandeur. He stands awe-struck before that which is stupendous, even though its qualities be only those of physical immensity, the mountain and the ocean. He pays homage to greatness, even though only displayed in dealing around destruction. His gods are the mighty ones. With what avidity have ever been received tales of heroes, enchanters, demigods, and their marvellous deeds! His imagination or his superstition has peopled the elements with spirits, laughing in the thunder, brandishing the lightning, and careering in the storm. His soul has courted mental tyranny and crouched before it, not merely in servility, but with an admiring sense of the dignity of the intellectual despot. In short, human nature delights in the contemplation of power, and has ever desired to witness grander manifestations of it than are to be found in the ordinary range of objects and the ordinary course of events. And it was with the holy spirit and with power that Christ was anointed. He was the power of God on earth. The waves were calm at his bidding, and the dead arose at his command. "What manner of man is this?" said his disciples when the tempest was hushed; "Verily this was the son of God," said the centurion when the heavens were darkened. Inanimate nature obeyed him; trees, winds, and waves. The organised frame obeyed him; the sightless eye, the deaf ear, the crippled limb, and the dead body. The deranged mind obeyed him; insanity confessed his presence, and grew serene at his voice; and the demon of disease departed. The intellect, the will, the heart, the life obeyed him. He said, "Follow me," and men left all to follow him. In the name and with the power of God he wrought a new creation, a moral creation. He commanded light; and the light of divine truth arose in the east, and went shining forth unto the west. He commanded love; and there was a band of brethren, of whom none called any thing his own, whom persecution might scatter but could not alienate, and whose faith and hope went forth conquering and to conquer. His

kingdom arose,—a kingdom not made with hands; a kingdom not of this world; the silent but omnipotent reign of peace and truth and righteousness over the soul of man,—and every species of human power was humbled before it. Imperial dignity, priestly art, philosophic pride, the reverence of antiquity, popular prejudice, the cupidity of the merchant, and the brute force of the soldier,—above them all it rolled triumphantly, and however they might rally and band themselves for the renewed fight, still the crucified Galilean overcame. Here is man's vision of power realised, or if his conception can reach yet further, yet shall it be realised; for "he shall reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet."

5. Some better guidance than they possessed to immortality and happiness and heaven has been the desire of all nations, from the rudest to the most refined. How have they not groped about after happiness, "our being's end and aim"! how have they not felt rising strongly in their bosoms the "longing after immortality"! The notion of another world seems indigenous to this world; that which is, universally generates the idea of that which is to come. Every region of the earth has been a prototype of heaven; the hunting-grounds of the Indian, and the Elysian fields of Greece. Death has reigned over mankind, and the grave conquered them; but they have always longed for death to be dethroned, and the grave to be vanquished. The soul has beaten against the bars of its mortal cage, knowing that its wings were made for flight, and that beyond these were large and glorious regions in which it should expatiate. Yes, the orphan's heart felt that he had a Father, though he knew him not; the soul of the immortal told of eternity, though he stood in the place of tombs. Here is the want, in our nature; here is the remedy, in the gospel. Christ died and rose again. He brought life and immortality to light, and threw open heaven's everlasting gates. Here was a future life ascertained; not by able speculation, but by historical fact. It was not proved theoretically, but exhibited practically. And the heaven and the happiness of Christianity, how simple, yet how satisfactory are they! Indefinite in those details which must be borrowed from earth, and are therefore sure to disappoint; but clear in those principles of enjoyment which the heart at once

recognises as the elements of its felicity. Christ appears as the leader of his brethren into a state of purity, knowledge, love, activity, and eternal progressiveness. God, by him, gives grace and glory; the one the consummation of the other. There is no other delineation of heaven which so elevates the character and commences its own realisation in the good man's mind on earth. It makes the very desire of that state an agency to prepare us for its possession. As Christ depicted it, the wish for heaven tends to raise a man above the world. Our highest interest becomes our most imperative duty; we best love ourselves in loving others; and he identifies the effort for individual and for universal happiness. To do good is to be good; and to be good is to become blessed: and thus are we led on till we become in purity and enjoyment one with him, as he is one with God, who will be all in all.

In this correspondence of the gospel with man's wants and desires we trace both the divinity of its origin and the benignity of its author. He framed it who made the heart and who knows the heart. They are the workmanship of the same Creator. They are the inspiration of longings into his children's hearts by a Parent who has nobly provided for their gratification. All souls are his; and if he left them a while to wander in doubt, fear, and bewildering anxiety, it was to make the Saviour whom he purposed to send the desire of all nations. Oh, he is "wise in counsel and excellent in working." May we "praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men"!

And if all have not at once recognised that which alone is the reality of their often undefined and indistinct desires, there is nothing strange in this; nothing but what from that very indistinctness we might have anticipated; nothing which perverted ingenuity can manufacture, though the attempt has been made, into a valid objection. Thousands and millions did recognise it at once, and its spread was as the lightning. And the clouds which gathered are evidently but clouds. Christianity *is* the universal religion, in its native fitness; and let any one contemplate the world, and deny its tendency to universality in fact. The nations of Christendom, at the head as they are of the human race, are the nations whose religion, even if it were not true, even if it were not divine, must become the religion of the

world. May the day hasten! God of heaven, let thy kingdom come, and in the seed of Abraham let all the nations of the earth be blessed!

Meanwhile, in its fitness for us, let our hearts be glad with a holy joy and a devout gratitude. This is the salvation, and such the Saviour who is adapted to our necessities. Our whole nature wants the gospel. Goodness wants it; penitence wants it; grief wants it; prosperity wants it; we want it in solitude; we want it in society; we want it in our weakness and in our energy; life wants it; death wants it; bereavement wants it: they all exclaim, "Come, Lord Jesus;" and he replies, "Behold, I come quickly." All hearts have their burdens; all spirits sometimes faint; and sweet to all is the voice which says, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

Sermon II.—The Song of Angels.

"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men" (Luke ii. 14).

Although the initial chapters of Luke are not liable to objections so strong as those which press upon the initial chapters of Matthew, they are yet attended with considerable difficulty. It is impossible to regard them as entitled to the same authority as that which belongs to the subsequent and undoubted parts of the narrative. I only refer now to the question of their authenticity, in order that the selection of this passage as the subject of our present attention may not be understood to imply the admission of that authenticity, which is, at best, but very doubtful. But although we cannot on such evidence sustain, as an historical fact, that at the birth of Christ a multitude of the heavenly host were heard by mortal ears singing, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men," yet we may assuredly take that language as a theme of discourse on the moral consequences of that event, of which it is a concise, a just, and a beautiful description. It is for such a purpose, and no other, that I adopt it on this occasion. The birth of Christ was the harbinger of a change in the state of the human race, of which the words

of the text are a most felicitous expression. They define what the gospel has been effecting ever since its influence was first felt; what it has always tended to promote, though counteracted by corruption; and what, in the revival of its simplicity and power, we may hope it will universally realise. They depict the objects of Christianity in this world—objects at the accomplishment of which it aims by employing the powers of the invisible realities of the world to come. Let us consider the extent to which the human race is already indebted for them to the benign operation of the gospel.

The gospel has brought "glory to God in the highest." It has diffused a knowledge of his character, designs, and government, which calls for the noblest praise from all on earth or in heaven. It has put to flight hordes of imaginary deities, whose names and attributes did worse than level divinity with humanity, and were fraught with pollution and disgrace. It has substituted for their fabulous history the sublime simplicity of the fact that God is one, a spirit, infinite, and everlasting. It has superseded that worship which consisted in licentious or cruel practices, or in unmeaning ceremonies, to excite the homage of the human voice and of the human heart. For a variety of endeavours to placate or please heaven, by what did no good to man, but often mischief both to the devotee and his fellow-creatures, it has asserted the sole availableness of moral worth as the passport to the divine favour. It has exhibited the character of God in all the glory of boundless love, to those who else would have had no conception of supreme excellence. It has made men, as subjects of the divine government, cease to feel that they were the slaves of blind fate, or the victims of chance as blind, and rejoice in being under the sway of impartial paternity. It has given glimpses of future blessedness, and imparted by Christian hope the foretaste of their enjoyment. It has raised devotion into a principle more pure and powerful than any other religion ever knew, and made man's bosom his Creator's temple, and enshrined the Deity in the humble heart, as his chosen holy of holies.

We know that the Deity cannot delight in praise as man does; for his felicity is strictly independent. We know that he cannot feel, as a creature would, the growing

progress of his fame, as multitudes, nations, and generations in succession become acquainted with his lovely character and mighty works, and the song of admiration swells yet louder and louder; for to him there is no progress, and time makes no discovery, and all futurity is present. We know that in pure condescension and love to us he unfolds as much as we can learn of what he is and does; and that the religious good of his creatures is his glory; but because it is their good, their best and highest good, he wills its promotion, and he has made Christianity the means of its noblest advance. The birth of Christ, considering the work to which he was destined, is the most important epoch in the religious history of the world. With the exception of the Jews, mankind had, before that, nothing which deserved the name of religion; and to him, or rather through him to God, must be traced whatever they have had of it since. Under the Mosaic system, religious knowledge was only in a state of preparation; from the time of Christ it has been in a state of diffusion. He fulfilled the law and the prophets, gave them completion, and sent them forth for universal attention.

There is no comparison between the importance of that knowledge of God which the great bulk of mankind has derived from nature, and that which it owes to revelation. In fact, they owe all to revelation; nor without it did even the wisest ever attain, nor in all probability ever would they have attained, to any thing like a just and complete view of the religious instructions of nature. The natural only became understood as it was illustrated by the supernatural. The mind seems always to repose on regularity, and is only roused by interruption to inquire into causes and tendencies. Miracles were the exciting cause of the devout contemplation of ordinary events. The most beautiful translation into human language of the voice of nature, of that speech which star uttereth to star, and day to night, in their Maker's praise, is to be found in the writings of those whose minds were formed by the extraordinary interpositions of Judaism. He who most effectively taught to consider the lilies of the field how they grow, so as to infer the care of the heavenly Father over his rational offspring, was the subject of prophecy, a worker of miracles, and exhibited in his own person the resurrection of the dead.

Even if there be actually no more religious truth than nature teaches, it is the merit of Christianity to have made millions know that truth, to have brought it forth from the seclusion of the philosopher's cell, and sent it to sojourn among the peasantry of the village, or cry aloud in the streets of the crowded city. But the very nature of the case implies that revelation is much more than this; it is the addition of a comparatively new class of facts, of the utmost importance, confirming in various ways the deductions from other sources, and bearing out many an inference, and suggesting many a hope, which could have been derived from no other source whatever. It brings more honour to God than creation and providence, not thus explained; inasmuch as the glory of forming mortal man is less than that of raising him to endless life; and that of merely struggling with necessary evil, less than that of making evil the means of producing a final sum of greater happiness.

The notions of Deity entertained in the world at large, before and after the coming of Christ, and the feelings cherished in consequence of those notions, present as broad a contrast as can be imagined. What could there be of what we call piety in connection with idolatry? The very elements of devotion scarcely existed but in the Jewish scriptures. Jesus framed them into an harmonious whole, and, by inviting all to adore in spirit the universal Father, brought "glory to God in the highest."

The promotion of "peace on earth" is another characteristic of the influences of the gospel.

Appalled by the survey of those rivers and oceans of blood which have been poured forth at the command of nominally Christian potentates, some have shrunk from the literal interpretation of this clause, and assigned it what is called a spiritual meaning, in reference to that tranquillity of mind, that peace with God and man's own conscience, which undoubtedly flows from the gospel. Beyond the sphere of its enlightening and soothing agency, men have too often added to the unquiet emotions produced by the visible and tangible evils of their lot the terrors of a superstition which peopled heaven with foes to earth, and invested its deities with superior power seemingly only to gratify superior malignity. They have been tormented also

with that far more reasonable apprehension which springs from the consciousness of guilt and the desert of punishment, without the assurance of divine mercy. The gospel does triumphantly encounter both these kinds of mental suffering: it enters the mind robed in light and love, and pronounces its benediction of peace. And this is undoubtedly a cogent reason for dwelling with complacency on the coming of Christ, and cherishing gratitude to God, who sent his Son on a mission of salvation to the world from such miseries. Yet the original reference seems plainly to be to external peace,—peace between man and man, party and party, nation and nation; nor is there any real reason to shrink from this boast on behalf of the gospel, or to view its actual results as unworthy of ascription to a benignant interposition of heaven.

The Christian body, as it existed in the early ages, had more of real unity than was ever before experienced in the world. It was not the union of nationality, for its members were of almost every then known country under heaven, including the most civilised and the most savage, the most abject and the most lordly. It was not the union of equal condition and station; for it embraced the member of the Sanhedrim or those of Nero's household, and the despised publican; and slaves mingled with their masters on terms of fraternity. It was not the union of common worldly pursuits and interests, for in these they were most dissimilar, or even opposite; and all that there was of common, in relation to earthly good, consisted in their making a common sacrifice of it to conscience. It was not the union of an identity of speculation, real or professed; for they allowed and held a diversity of opinions, modified by their previous habits of thought, and by different methods of reasoning on those facts which are the essentials, and the only essentials, of Christianity. Creeds of numerous and abstract propositions—those monstrous abortions of a mistaken notion of uniformity—were not then engendered. It was not the union of church government and ceremony; for in the former I think the New Testament contains strong indications of a considerable diversity; and as to the latter, we find that in the same society some observed days, and others did not; some abstained from meats which others took without scruple; and each was exhorted not to con-

form, or make others conform to him, but to be fully persuaded in his own mind, and not to judge or despise his brother. It was the uniformity of affection, piety, and virtue; the feeling of being fellow-travellers on a pilgrimage here, and advancing towards a common home hereafter; a lively, mutual sympathy, and a strong confederation in the promotion of their common object, the glory of God and the good of man, which pure Christianity alone blends in one. This made them, and they were, of one heart and mind. *They* were built up together into a holy temple to the Lord, who, but for the harmonising influences of the gospel, would have passed through life hating and hated, with bitter hearts and hostile hands. The spirit in which they were one was a spirit of peace, which moved upon the face of many a stormy wave, and blended into a calm what seemed only a chaos of contending elements.

The wars of the dark ages which followed have been sometimes charged on Christianity; but every one who observes the characters of the leading actors in those bloody scenes must be aware that Christianity had no connection with them, save only as its name was used by men who, had they lacked that, would readily have found some other pretext for the gratification of their ambition and rapacity. Even the unbeliever knows that their creeds were not the faith of Christianity, that their forms were not the worship of Christianity, and that their spirit was not the spirit of Christianity. They not only corrupted the religion, but proscribed its sacred records and immured them from the public, knowing that if the Bible went forth to the world, wherever it went it would bear witness against them, pronounce their condemnation, predict their punishment, and make earth echo with the cries of millions for reformation. Thus, by implication self-convicted of the grossest departure from the gospel, their warlike spirit is, to say the least, no presumption against the peaceful tendency of the gospel.

What say the scriptures of the origin of conflicts?—"From whence come wars and fightings among you? Come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members? Ye lust, and have not; ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain." What say they of the means of warfare?—"Resist not evil by evil, but rather overcome it

with good;" "they that take the sword shall perish with the sword." What say they of the effect of their own prevalence on wars?—that they "shall cease to the ends of the earth; that nation shall not rise up against nation, neither shall they learn war any more."

And in that celebrated passage, which accumulates, as in a jewelled diadem, the varied gorgeousness of oriental splendour, the title which beams above the rest in brightness is that of the "Prince of Peace." So far as this is believed, so far as this is felt, there can be no doubt of the tendency of Christianity. And though this leaven have not leavened the mass of society, yet is it there, and facts have not been wanting to denote its presence and activity. It may be long before nations are governed on such principles; but their spirit is abroad—their day of power is coming. They are, to us at least, a pledge of a happier state of things on earth—the pledge of Providence itself; and that is a theme worthy of our praises, worthy to be the burden of the song of angels.

The gospel was a proclamation of "good will toward men." It unfolded the love of God, that it might kindle ours; beautifully arguing, that if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another. It makes mercy to others in the transactions of life the condition of mercy to ourselves in the day of judgment. It sets up benevolence as the test of piety, declaring that the love of God dwelleth not in him who seeth his brother in want without compassion. It resolves all nations into a common origin, and affirms that of one blood God made them all. The blessedness of giving it exalts above that of receiving, reversing the preference of the selfish, and ennobling the desire of enjoyment. In the affection of kindred it embraces all the virtuous, and reminds us that the vilest is a brother too. It analyses the moral law, and concludes that love is the fulfilling of the commandments. Faith and hope are compared with charity, and placed below it for excellence of nature and permanence of duration. It is a system of benevolence, theoretically and practically; ranking that quality preëminent among the attributes of God, the duties of earth, and the felicities of heaven.

What is there more glorious than its description of the Deity by the appellation of Father, which at once seizes

some of the first and strongest and purest feelings of reverence and love that enter the human mind, elevates them to an infinite object, and sanctifies them into piety; which decides a multitude of controversies and dispels a multitude of errors, rendering all ascriptions to him of caprice or partiality or vengeance a moral impossibility; which enlightens and illustrates the dealings of Providence, giving glimpses of the love that glows behind the clouds of affliction; which pours balm into the wounded bosom, and tells the penitent of pardon and of peace; which encircles, as with a golden chain, heaven and earth, time and eternity,— presenting love as the first impulse of the Divine nature to the mighty work of creation, and as the final crown of that work in the felicities of the universal restoration. What is our appropriate homage to such a God but good will to men?

What is there more lovely than the Saviour's example? This proclamation of benevolence was indeed a fitting one for him to make, nor could it have a worthier herald. He was his own Good Samaritan; and not the less so for adorning, in that very parable, with all the graces of humanity one of a people who were the peculiar objects of Jewish bigotry and hatred. His miracles were exercises of heavenly power for the relief of earthly misery. His precepts and his actions were identical,— the same thing, taught in the one case by words, and by deeds in the other. He was ever the same to his friends: throughout his ministry they found him the good shepherd, and he closed it by laying down his life for his sheep. He was ever the same to his enemies: on the Mount of Olives he wept their obduracy, on the cross he forgave their injuries, and in glory he commanded that first at Jerusalem the gospel should be preached. What is discipleship to such a Master but being filled with good will toward men?

What is more impressive than that description in the twenty-fifth chapter of Matthew, which, whether it immediately relate to the destruction of Jerusalem or to the final judgment, is alike declaratory of the principles on which that tribunal decides before which we must all appear? What are all the charges against the condemned but different manifestations of unfeeling and gross selfishness? What are all the actions which the Judge applauds but different forms of that benevolence which is the same,

whether it clothe the naked, visit the prisoner, or relieve the stranger? What is the preparation for such a trial but good will to men?

The text, then, is a worthy burden for celestial songs. It deserves to be chanted to their golden harps by the angels of heaven, and to be echoed back by the pilgrims of earth, as they pursue their course in piety and peace and love.

Sermon III.—Christianity defined.

"The word which God sent unto the children of Israel" (Acts x. 36).

What is Christianity? There are few questions to which persons professing to be well informed on the subject will give a greater variety of answers than are given to this. Some make it consist in a system of church authority to be obeyed, and others in a system of doctrines to be believed. Of what that church authority is they give different accounts, varying from the absolute mastery of an infallible pope to the responsible administration of elders elected by the whole community. Those who place Christianity in doctrine are equally divided. The Unitarian often says, that Christianity consists of the tenets of the Divine Unity and benevolence; the mission of Christ; the resurrection of the dead; and a righteous judgment. Another calls these mere naturalism, or little more, and says that the peculiar and essential truths of the gospel are the Trinity, original sin, satisfaction by the death of Christ to divine justice, the influence of the Spirit, and eternal election. There is a question prior to the discussion of all these discordant accounts; and that is, whether Christianity, strictly and properly so called, be a system of doctrine or discipline at all; and whether it be not rather a fact, or a series of facts; from which, indeed, certain doctrines may be deduced, and to extend the moral influence of which certain discipline may perhaps be usefully exercised, but which is in itself distinct from both.

It is certainly to be regretted that many who call themselves Christians, and many who deserve the honour which that appellation may convey, for they exemplify the goodness it implies, should give such various and such vague

answers to a question which would at first be deemed of the easiest solution.

This diversity brings scandal upon their cause from the unbeliever, and it has been connected with much bigotry, schism, and exclusiveness among themselves. As the least of its evils, we may place an indefiniteness of thought and language which makes their notions on theological subjects incoherent; and even this is exceedingly undesirable, and worth an effort for its removal.

A definition of Christianity should describe only what is essential and what is peculiar. The discipline which has been practised for its promotion is neither the one nor the other. The New Testament neither is nor contains a code of church laws. So far as we can trace the facts, the discipline of the Jewish synagogues, with some modifications demanded by circumstances, was that which obtained amongst the early Christians. So far was this from being an institution originating in any former divine revelation, that we can scarcely find that synagogues existed till the line of prophets closed in Malachi. It arose as a matter of expedience, when required by the necessities of the Jews; it was adopted and altered as a matter of expedience by the converts to Christianity. The iron sceptre of ecclesiastical domination, whether wielded by Leo the pope in the Vatican, or by Diotrephes the elder in a barn, no more fell from heaven than the golden image of Diana of the Ephesians. Nor can those who make Christianity a system of doctrine give a definition which shall possess the requisite qualifications of expressing what is both peculiar and essential. One would not consent to the exclusion of the Trinity, nor another to that of the Unity of God, from such a definition; and yet both would contend that their opinion on that topic was taught by Moses and the prophets. The Unitarian especially must admit that the doctrines of Christianity are to be found in Judaism, and even the expectation and faith of a future life were prevalent in Palestine before Christ began his mission. Nay, Christ appeals to the Old Testament in proof of the resurrection from the dead. What, then, is left but that we consider the essence of Christianity as consisting neither in doctrine nor in discipline, but in facts? This view is amply borne out in the passage which the text introduces, and is

also confirmed by the general language of the New Testament.

The text is evidently the title or theme of a professed description of Christianity. That was *the word,* the discourse, or message which God sent. It is the language of the apostle Peter, and therefore bearing as high an authority as any description can bear, unless coming from our Lord himself. It was the first sermon preached to the Gentiles, and would therefore contain all that was essential to Christianity; while, as Cornelius had a competent knowledge of Judaism, and was already a proselyte to its theology, though not to its ceremony, there would be no occasion to state what was common to both parts of divine revelation, but only that which was peculiar to Christianity. Here, then, we may fairly expect to find the whole of Christianity, and nothing but Christianity, using that word as exclusive of every other system whatever, even though, as Judaism, equally divine.

I answer, therefore, the question stated at the commencement of this discourse, not in my own words, but in those of the apostle Peter in what we may fairly take as a compendium of Christianity—an abridged gospel:

"Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: but in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him. The word which God sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ: (he is Lord of all:) that word, I say, ye know, which was published throughout all Judea, and began from Galilee, after the baptism which John preached; how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him. And we are witnesses of all things which he did both in the land of the Jews, and in Jerusalem; whom they slew and hanged on a tree: him God raised up on the third day, and showed him openly; not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God, even to us, who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead. And he commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is he which was ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead. To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever be-

lieveth in him shall receive remission of sins" (Acts x. 34-43).

Now, omitting what, in this discourse, is merely confirmatory or introductory, as the baptism of John, and the witnessing of apostles and prophets, and an expression which belongs to the philosophy, or perhaps only to the phraseology, of the day, the ascription of disease to the devil, of what does it consist? Simply of a statement of facts. It affirms the mission, work, death, and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth. These, then, are Christianity.

Has Christianity, then, no doctrines? Yes; whatever doctrines are borne out by these facts. Has Christianity no morals? Yes; whatever habits these facts by their influence lead men to form, whatever actions these facts show to be connected with his happiness. Still, these are the branches, and the facts are the stem; these are the produce of Christianity, those are Christianity itself. That this view has the testimony not only of Peter, but of the sacred writers generally, is an assertion which I would rest on two circumstances, which may be verified by an inspection of the Acts and Epistles: 1, that the admission of these facts constituted a believer a Christian, as is evident by referring to the recorded conversions generally; and, 2, that whenever even the apostles went beyond these, they reasoned the matter—if with Jews, from the Old Testament; if with heathens, from nature; if with believers, from these admitted facts. Each may be illustrated in Paul. In the synagogue at Antioch he appealed to the Hebrew prophets. On Mars' Hill, at Athens, he argued from the majesty of the creature to that of the Creator. Writing to the Christians of Corinth, he inferred the resurrection of man from the resurrection of Christ. The general practice, then, as well as the particular instance, conducts us to the conclusion, that Christianity consists of facts from which theological truths are to be elicited by the exercise of human reason. I shall now advert to the advantages of this view of the gospel.

1. It harmonises Christianity and Judaism. We find that there existed in Judea, at the coming of Christ, the knowledge of a mass of theological truth, which the unaided mind of man, in its most enlightened state, in other countries, had not attained to. The wisdom of Greece itself was folly in comparison. How came the Jews by this know-

ledge? It was the result of supernatural interference, no doubt; but in what way? The only satisfactory answer is, that they deduced it from the extraordinary events of their history. Revelation never proceeded by the declaration of general or abstract propositions. The oracles which are recorded were for the guidance of the nation or of individuals in particular emergencies; but not for the communication of articles of faith. Even the assertion of the sole deity of Jehovah at the commencement of the ten commandments, which has more the air of a general proposition than any thing else in the Old Testament whatever,—even this was closely connected with the occasion, and was made for a particular and specific purpose: "I am the Lord thy God, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt, and out of the house of bondage." This made him the One God to them. From his humbling the most powerful nations, they learned his omnipotence. By his predicting future events, they ascertained his omniscience. In his judgments on the remotest regions, they saw his omnipresence. When Dagon was prostrated; when Bel bowed down, and Nebo stooped; when the fabled deities of Philistia, Babylon, and Egypt were put to shame before him,—they exclaimed, and rightly, that he was the God of gods, the Most High over all the earth. To exhibit in their eventful history the fact of his government, appears to have been the great object of the Jewish dispensation. In like manner the great object of Christianity was to add to the evidence of his government that of man's living hereafter. We might expect that it would inculcate this principle in a way analogous to that in which Judaism gave its instructions, viz. not by the authoritative assertion of general propositions to be believed —which is some people's notion of revelation—but by a fact or facts irresistibly leading the mind to that conviction. Accordingly it does so by the public death and authenticated resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth. Here, then, is harmony between the two systems. The latter is the completion and perfection of the former; it goes on the same principle; it operates by a similar process. Christ fulfilled the law and the prophets: the history of Judaism shows that there is a God that ruleth in the earth; the history of Christ shows that man shall exist hereafter.

2. It harmonises revelation and reason; and this, I believe, is done by no other view, however rational in its doctrines when separately considered. All other definitions of Christianity are pressed by the difficulty of saying where the province of reason ends and that of faith begins; and they all fail of a satisfactory motive for drawing that line at one point rather than at another. Now on this view of Christianity there is no such difficulty, because there is no longer any incompatibility between faith and reason. The revelation is *in the facts*. It consists of whatever theological propositions reason justly deduces from those facts. The supremacy of Jehovah is a revealed truth, for it is proved by the humiliation of Egypt and of Babylon. The future life of man is a revealed truth, for it is ascertained by the revival of Jesus. Each is ascertained by the agency of reason on supernatural events which God ordained for that specific purpose. Reason, therefore, is essential to revelation, instead of their being incompatible or mutually limiting. Truth is revealed or discovered *by* the event *to* the inquirer. There was no revelation to the Jew or his neighbour, who had the events, but did not reason upon them. There was no revelation to the Greek, who did exercise his reason, but had not the supernatural events for its guidance and illumination. The conjunction is essential.

3. It simplifies the arguments for Christianity against the Deist. It is astonishing how much has been written by both parties in this controversy which is completely beside the mark; how much has been laboriously proved or disproved which mattered nothing, whether true or false, to the great question at issue. That question is really a bare historical fact—Did Jesus of Nazareth rise from the dead? He who disproves that fact, destroys Christianity; and he who has proved that fact has proved Christianity. When Deists object to the way in which Jewish warriors used their victories, or Jewish prophets communicated their instructions; when they assail the apostleship of this man or the authority of that book; when they detect exploded philosophy in Moses, or inconsequential argument in Paul; when they labour to show a proverb not wise, or a precept not practicable; when they argue that Joshua was not merciful, and David not

pure, that the Jews were not refined, and the insane not possessed; and when they call this disproving Christianity, —they are as trifling as the divines who, with infinite zeal and toil, meet them on all these points, and call that establishing Christianity. Were the Deists completely triumphant on every one of these points—which is very far indeed from being the case—still Christianity would not be demolished, would not be shaken, would not be touched. It would stand like a castle on a rock; and all that the combatants had ascertained would be, whether certain plants at its base were weeds or flowers. What can be more absurd than such arguments as these: The Trinity is not a rational doctrine, therefore Christ did not rise from the dead; or, Jewish doctors were wrong as to the cause of insanity, therefore Christ did not rise from the dead; or, Moses did not understand Sir Isaac Newton's theory of the planetary system, therefore Christ did not rise from the dead? And yet to this may very much be reduced which has been put forth as destructive of Christianity. For if it disproves not that fact, it disproves nothing.

4. This view of the gospel does much towards determining the Trinitarian controversy. Peter stated to Cornelius the facts which make up Christianity. Now what are the just doctrinal inferences from his statement? Are they those of Trinitarianism or of Unitarianism? There is no mention in it of more than one divine person; God is spoken of in the singular, consequently as an undivided being, person, or mind; and represented as the sole fountain of authority, of power, and of felicity. Every thing is traced to him as the great original. It is a narrative; but that narrative implies the doctrine of *the proper unity of God.*

The *impartiality* of God is distinctly announced; that great and glorious truth which had been just impressed on the apostle's mind by the extraordinary event which sent him to the house of Cornelius, to commence the union of Gentiles with Jews in the knowledge, love, and worship of their common God and Father.

As to *Jesus Christ,* it refers his public appearance to a divine mission from a superior—*God sent him;* it introduces him, not as God, but as the agent of God, who

preached peace *by him;* he is Lord and Judge, but to that office he was *ordained of God;* his miracles are traced to a divine *anointing with the Holy Spirit;* his works are accounted for by *God being with him;* his resurrection is affirmed in the phrase that *him God raised up;* and coupling these facts with his death, there seems nothing rash in the inference of the *humanity of Christ.*

The Holy Spirit is mentioned as that with which Christ was anointed, as the miraculous principle or energy; this is all concerning it, and this is indicative of *impersonality.* A resurrection and judgment are inferences on which I need not dwell, because no Christian will dispute them with us.

The testimony to remission of sins in his name is no testimony to election, reprobation, or satisfaction. The remission of sin is not the transfer of punishment, and the name of Christ is authority for resting on the free grace of God.

The doctrines, then, of Unitarian Christianity are here —are involved in the facts as stated by the apostle; but by no fair process, that I can perceive, can the opposite tenets of a Trinity, the supreme deity of Christ, the personality of the Holy Spirit, or vicarious suffering, be deduced from the narrative. It should, therefore, induce us to retain the former as divine revelation, and to discard the latter as human invention.

5. What defines Christianity defines a Christian also. To enter the Church of Rome, a man must submit to the authority of the pope; to join in the worship of the Church of England, he must occasionally assent to the Athanasian Creed; to arrive at the Lord's table, among most Dissenters, he must avow faith in various general propositions: nothing of all this was known or practised by the first Christians. The Eunuch was recognised as a Christian on affirming that Jesus was the Christ; Cornelius on assenting to the facts in Peter's address; and Paul broadly states the principle of their action to the Romans (x. 8, 9): "The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach; that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved."

This is the true criterion of Christianity. Here are no disputable points, no dark speculations, no degrading requirements. Adherence to it would have prevented a thousand disgraceful contentions; it would have precluded arbitrary assumptions and vile submissions. It would have enchained the spirit of bigotry, and quenched the flames of persecution. It would have maintained the right of individual judgment, and stimulated in the career of individual improvement. In all the gloomy pages of ecclesiastical history; in ceremonies the most unmeaning, and in reveries the wildest; in usurpations the most daring; in persecutions, anathemas, and bloodshed,—where do we not find, at the very root of the mischief, a departure from the New-Testament definition of a Christian, the additional requirement of something which, whether false or true, the imposers had no right to require, in consistency with their own character as disciples, with the equal claims of Christian brotherhood, with the apostolic description of Christian truth, and with the New-Testament charter of Christian liberty?

Finally, this view of Christianity shows it as a means of improvement, and therefore as subservient to virtue and happiness. So far from superseding or limiting the employment of the intellect, it demands that employment. It furnishes food for the mind, and invites it to the feast. It summons to the contemplation of the most astonishing facts, and bids us read the powerful lessons which they teach—lessons of piety to God, of good will to man; of present exertion, and of future recompense. He that runs may read; and he that reads must profit. We acquire knowledge of God, and that knowledge reaches the heart, reforms the life, purifies the character. Every faculty of the mind is exercised, invigorated, and employed for the production of righteousness. Faith works by love, and truth leads on obedience, resignation, and hope. "The word which God sent to the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ," he sends to us also; we have it in the sacred records: heaven gave it; reason beholds it; it is the theme of devotion; it is the rule of life; it is the balm of sorrow; it is the pledge of immortality; it is the germ of universal felicity.

Sermon IV.—The Gospel a Principle of Equality.

"The voice of him that crieth (or, A voice crieth) in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain: and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it" (Isaiah xl. 3-5).

All the four evangelists have applied these words to John the Baptist, and they are accurately and beautifully descriptive of his ministry. If, however, they were not delivered as an independent oracle, but in the connection in which they here stand, we must conclude the direct or primary object of the prediction to have been the return of the Jews from the Babylonian captivity. In the preceding chapter that captivity had been announced by the prophet to Hezekiah, who, in the pride of his heart, had displayed all his regal treasures to the messengers of the Babylonian monarch. It was a dreadful rebuke; and he humbled himself beneath it, and said, in the language of devout submission, "Good is the word of the Lord which thou hast spoken." Good, no doubt; for he is good, however mysterious his dispensations may for a time appear. Good in its design and ultimate results, though, in the endurance of the calamity it declares, most painful and overwhelming. And so it was; for that heaviest of all the inflictions to which the children of Abraham were subjected anterior to their final dispersion proved a precious blessing. It destroyed their propensity to idolatry. It totally subdued a disposition which, in the strength of its obstinacy, had up to that period defied all the agencies employed against it, and resisted nature and miracle, reason and inspiration, the severest judgments and the richest mercies. From that time, stocks and stones, the statue or the painting, the visible image or the fancied form, creatures of earth or stars of heaven, ceased to be the objects of religious veneration by the Jew. Whatever other guilt might pollute the nation, or whatever other vices might blacken individual character, they never again abandoned the faith and worship of the one living God. The prophetic word of their calamity was therefore good. And so is all calamity; for evil is a

means, and not an end, in the divine government. Such prospects, however, can scarcely be supposed to have opened on the mind of the humbled sovereign of Judea. His was the submission of faith, of confidence that the Judge of the earth will do right. And that faith was most reasonable. Thus should we submit, when not even a gleam of brightness struggles through the gloom of our afflictions. Past experience, our own, that of the world, sufficiently shows that the heaviest sorrows have been but harbingers of the noblest enjoyments, to check despondency. Sufficiently, too, is the paternal character of God unfolded, to assure us that evil is in no case final, that its subserviency to good is the principle of his dealings. Hezekiah had recourse to the melancholy alleviation of the postponement of the evil time: "He said moreover, for there shall be peace and truth in my days." The prophet immediately gives him nobler consolation. He declares the fulfilment of the divine purpose in that national calamity, and its consequent termination: "Comfort ye, comfort ye, my people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her that her warfare is accomplished; that her iniquity is pardoned; for she hath received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins:" or rather, according to Lowth, "she shall receive blessings double to the punishment of all her sins." These verses cannot be applied to the state of things at the mission of the Baptist. Judea was not then emerging from punishment to the enjoyment of prosperity, but filling up the measure of her iniquities, and with a far more awful desolation than the Babylonian captivity impending, and soon to be realised to the uttermost. If thus connected, therefore, the return from that captivity was the event predicted in the text.

An immense tract of desert separated Babylon from Judea. Even to exiles returning to their own country it appeared formidable and perilous. When monarchs passed through that or similar regions, they were preceded by troops of men whose employment was to dig down precipices, to fill up hollows, and render practicable their easy course. Their way was thus prepared. The prophet announces the return of the Jews, as one who heard in the wilderness the voice of a herald, commanding a clear and triumphant passage to be made for the Deity himself.

Though they were a feeble band of pilgrims, that glorious presence should be amongst them which led them out of Egypt, and through the Red Sea, and along the wilderness of Sinai. The same power should throw down every obstacle and remove every difficulty; the loftiest should bend before it, and the way be made straight and plain to the reëstablishment of their temple, worship, and polity. They should all see the glory of the Lord, and the nations around behold and wonder. The books of Ezra and Nehemiah are an historical commentary on this prediction. They show what difficulties were created by jealousy, treachery, and violence, and how those difficulties were surmounted. They narrate how Providence accomplished what inspiration had promised. Leaving this, however, I shall briefly remark the justice of the evangelical application of this passage, taken separately, to the ministry of the Baptist; and then adopt it as a poetical description of the influence of Christianity.

The literal conformity of his dwelling and preaching in the wilderness could not escape notice. He was also the harbinger of another and greater character, Jesus the Christ, in and by whom the glory of God was revealed, so that all flesh or mankind at large, the human race ultimately, should see it together. His was a ministry of preparation, challenging attention, not on himself, but on that greater and more highly gifted Teacher who was to come, and whose mission was for the instruction of all nations. If the other parts of the description be incapable of a literal application, they are yet, in their obvious figurative meaning, strictly appropriate. Jerusalem was a wilderness of ignorance, prejudice, and vice; full of mountains of pride and valleys of debasement, rough places of violence and crooked ways of craft; and he came in the spirit of Elijah, preaching the baptism of repentance and reformation, and commanding them to purify themselves against the advent of that promised Messiah whose reception would have been their salvation, as his rejection was their ruin. He admonished all classes—the abandoned publican, and the sanctimonious Pharisee; the Sadducee with his mutilated scriptures, and the Scribe with his accumulated traditions; the armed soldier and the peaceful citizen; the multitudes which came out to him from their towns, and the stragglers that

wandered in the desert; the burdened slave, and the crowned sovereign. He discharged his duty with faithfulness and energy; he fulfilled his mission; he passed away; that cry in the wilderness was heard no longer; but in its stead there was the gentle voice of the Son of God, mourning the wickedness of man, declaring the mercy of a paternal God, and breathing forth the invitation, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

I apply the text to the effects of his gospel on the world, the change which it has already wrought, and that greater change which it is destined to accomplish. It is a noble picture of the equalising tendency of his religion, not on men's external circumstances, but on their feelings. Its progress has been to level the prejudices that fostered pride, and intercepted affection and charity, and to make all men brothers in each other's estimation. Its whole force bears upon this point; and we must rejoice that it does; for in no way could it more effectually promote the happiness of mankind here, while it prepares them for felicity hereafter. To raise up distinctions has been the result, and generally the design, of other systems; to make men feel that what is common is more important than what is peculiar is the glorious object of the gospel.

It teaches that there is one universal God. In heathenism man looked down contemptuously on man, and nation on nation, among other reasons, because they had not the same deities; and while their system allowed the existence of others, it usually arrogated the superiority of their own. Their heaven was as divided as the earth, and the fancied divisions of the former aggravated the real animosities of the latter. In their superstition, they had not the same Creator, they were not under the care of the same protecting Providence; and if they anticipated a future judgment at all, they held themselves not responsible to the same tribunal. To tell men that they have one God is to tell them that they are one. To unite them in his worship is to form a holy and a powerful bond of union. When Ruth said to Naomi, "Thy God shall be my God," it implied what she had just before said, "thy people shall be my people." Some community of feeling, some superior kindness, has always existed as a result of adoring the same

God: with a plurality of deities, this becomes the source of faction; with one God, of philanthropy. To have travelled the same road, to have been encompassed by a common danger, to have partaken in a common deliverance, and to have enjoyed the same pleasures,—in short, almost every experience of the same train of emotions,—has a tendency to unite men's hearts. Preëminently is this the case with a common worship. That brings a consciousness of identical feeling of the most impressive and awful kind. And believing that all have the same God, though they know him not, extends this feeling in some degree to all. He who loves God will love man, because he is the workmanship of God. How touching a reproof to injurious or contemptuous action is the inquiry, "Have we not all one Father? Hath not one God created us?"

The gospel teaches that we are all sprung from the same human parents; that not only are all mankind the creatures of God, but that he hath formed them of one blood; this the superstitions of antiquity never recognised; this the vanity of birth has too often practically denied; this a superficial philosophy has sometimes affected to disprove. But the scriptures have given it currency as an historical assertion, and the progress of research has been to confirm the fact, showing its harmony with the actual progress of population, and its perfect consistency with all such diversities as exist in form and colour. Every man feels something of the powerful ties of family: and how benignant is the system which aims at twining those bonds around the whole human race; which inculcates that, as they have but one heavenly, so had they but one earthly father; which bids them look back to the time when nations were but individuals, and those individuals were brethren! How adapted is this notion to put down the disposition to regard some as made by nature to be our enemies, and others to be our beasts of burden! In the mythology of ancient times, there were descendants of the deities themselves, mingling in the world with creatures of mere earthly origin, and holding them in a contempt which was redeemed from being ridiculous by being pernicious. In that of modern Hindostan, the superior castes claim a nobler origin in the material and mode of creation than the inferior; and the doctrine and the practice harmonise

in their equally disgusting privileges and degradations. It was wise and merciful of God, in the constitution of things to provide, and in the annals of revelation to record, so universal and palpable a plea for humanity as a brotherhood originally literal, an actual descent from the same parents. It corrects a thousand fictions of crooked policy, and levels mountains of malignant pride, and raises millions to the dignifying consciousness of equality whose minds, imbruted by the oppression that yoked their bodies, had assented to the notion of their natural inferiority, and sealed the bond of their own servitude. It is a blessing that all are the children of Adam, though by Adam "death came into the world," and in him all die; for the mournfulness of inheriting a mortal constitution is alleviated by the charities of a common origin, and human brotherhood is balm for the anguish of human mortality.

And if there be for that agony a far better alleviation; if mortality may not only be submitted to, but triumphed over; if Jesus has risen from the dead, the herald and harbinger of a universal resurrection; if "as in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive,"—we cannot forget that Christianity as much identifies all humankind with Christ in the prospect of a future life, as it does with Adam in the decree of mortality. He was one of us; a brother of the same great family. To a rising deity, a rising angel, we should have stood in no such relation. Nay, had there been, as some have imagined, different species of men, the fact, the argument, the hope, would have been neutralised. It is the identity of human nature, and Christ's participation of this nature, which forms the connecting link between his resurrection and our eternal hopes. Thus is he the spiritual Lord of the dead and of the living, the desire of all nations, the promised seed of blessing to all the families of the earth. We are again one in Christ, as we were one in Adam; and that unity is the pledge of our rising to the possession of immortal existence. How could that hope have been imparted in a more beneficent form? In what way would its object or its evidence have been so friendly to philanthropy? Death and the resurrection, the sternest and the brightest figures in our pictures of futurity, are both made by the gospel teachers of brotherly love. And similar is the spirit of all his teaching who was the great

exemplar both of our duty and of our destiny. There was a universality of benignant design about all he said and did. If he delivered revealed doctrine, it was in those simple terms which he who runs may read. Did he speak in parables? The imagery was of the homeliest yet most affecting kind. The excellence of his life and character was not in its conformity with any local and temporary standard, but must be perceived and admired wherever and whenever it is fairly contemplated. The good of all mankind was in his heart, and the object alike of his desires, his prayers, and his mission. If the first object of his religion be glory to God in the highest, the next is peace on earth, good will towards men. If he reminds us that we have but one Father, God—but one Master, Christ—he blends with both the affirmation, "all ye are brethren." His gospel is addressed to every rational creature, and to all alike; imposing the same duties, and proffering the same blessings.

The representations of Christianity as to the complete dependence of all upon God, the obligation of all to him for whatever they are or possess, is another stream from the same fountain of truth, and flows into the same ocean of benevolence. The gospel recognises no disparity of mind, body, or circumstance; no talent or acquirement; nothing of superiority in intellect, character, or influence, —but as the gift of God. On every rising emotion of pride it demands, "What hast thou that thou didst not receive?" and hurls man back to that level with his fellow-creatures from which he vainly fancied himself emerging. "He that is greatest among you shall be your servant," is its language, not only to apostles, but to all; not only in reference to spiritual gifts, but to all that man has by nature, or acquires by industry. They are a trust for the common good. They are the bounty of God to the world through individuals; but not a patent of superiority for those individuals. It demolishes the superciliousness and scorn, the selfishness and ambition, which genius, wealth, and power have too often cherished, and cherished at the expense of the best feelings of their possessors and the best interests of mankind.

Christianity depicts the Deity as impartial in his omnipotent love to his rational creatures, and unites them in

their final condition, as it did in their origin. I speak of genuine Christianity: for a direr contrast with its spirit can scarcely be found than in that nominal Christianity which makes some the objects of his eternal love, others of his eternal hate, although he is their common Lord and Maker; which makes the universal sorrows of our earthly destiny the chastisements of paternal goodness to some and the visitations of wrath to others; and which, while it allows that all shall exist to eternity, overwhelms every feeling of community in that prospect, by setting up the tremendous disparity of eternal felicity and eternal torment. Were this Christianity, it would raise more frowning precipices than it ever levelled, and more enduring ones; it would sink a far deeper abyss of wretchedness than any which it promised to fill for the triumphant passage of truth and goodness. Its real object is to unite all in Christ; its real tendency, the spiritual liberty of the whole creation; its real close, the chorus of all voices in the song of salvation. And thus its doctrine of the future state harmonises with its precepts for present duty. There is the same tendency to throw into the shade, to enfeeble, to destroy that which distinguishes men; and to elevate in the view of the understanding, and fasten upon the heart, that which characterises man. Every doctrine, in tracing its influence, brings us back, though by a diversified path, to the same principle; and that is, according to the summary of Christ himself, that while our devotion is, to love the Lord our God with all our heart and soul, our mind and strength, our morality is, to love our neighbour—and, in Christ's exposition, man is our neighbour—as ourself.

And how can we, each one of us, enter into this plan of Providence and grace, and promote this object of the Christian dispensation? Obviously by the cultivation of a kind and humble spirit in our own bosoms. We should aim at putting down there the only worship which ought not to be tolerated—the idolatry of self, which has outlived so many mythologies, and will outlive those whose temples yet are standing. We should cherish a respect for others' qualities, a regard for others' feelings, and thus be deterred from the deliberate, or what is perhaps more common, the unthinking, sacrifice of them to our own gratification. We should carry into our actions the emotions of our worship

to that one God who is the common Creator, Father, Restorer of the human race. Then shall we be growing into the moral image of Christ, who came "not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many."

We may advance it, too, by the profession and seasonable defence of principles whose truth and worth are manifested by their tendency to promote human happiness. They may not always and instantly affect the conduct; but we may safely rely upon the general influence of the faith over the practice, the connection of knowledge with virtue, and of virtue with enjoyment. We may therefore be assured that by promoting truth we are doing good. The seed we scatter will, in due time, bear the fruits of peace and righteousness. The humblest votary of the gospel, in his own estimation, and to all human appearance, may even, merely by his unobtrusive but consistent adherence to great principles, be the occasion of their reaching many an intellect, subverting many a prejudice, and turning many from crooked ways into the path of rectitude.

The good of others, the improvement of man, the prevalence of knowledge on earth, the union of the virtuous in heaven, the final restoration of all, should be frequently in our minds, to the exclusion of merely selfish anticipations. They are so glorious, and will become so delightful, that mean, base, and grovelling feelings will not abide their presence, but shrink from them, like the bird of night from sunshine, or the dismayed Israelites from the divine effulgence. The soul that broods over the world in the complacency of love and hope has the best source of virtue in its enjoyments, and shall at length behold all that seems wild and chaotic in the universe rising into the beauty of order by the guidance of Almighty Wisdom, and hear God's nobler blessing on the new heavens and the new earth of his moral creation.

Sermon V.—On the Baptism of Christ.

"Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptised of him. But John forbad him, saying, I have need to be baptised of thee, and comest thou to me? And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he suffered him. And Jesus, when he was baptised, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: and lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Mat. iii. 13-17).

Such was the public designation of our Lord to his important office; his divine investiture with that authority on which faith may rest, and to which obedience must be rendered. The transaction is well worth attention, both in the particulars into which it may be analysed, and in its general connection with his character, mission, and the religion he came to establish.

The first question which arises upon the narrative is, How came Jesus to offer himself to the baptism of John?

Baptism, or washing with certain religious forms, is to this day not uncommon in the East, as an emblem of purification. Their customs make it significant. There is, I think, sufficient evidence of its having been practised by the Jews, before the time of John, in the case of proselytes. They baptised converts from heathenism; but not their descendants, who were supposed to be included in their parents' baptism. Their Rabbis represent the whole nation as having been baptised at the giving of the law. There was great propriety in John's baptising, as the herald of the Messiah, who was to prepare the Jews for his reception by a general reformation of manners. It was the baptism, as his was the preaching, of repentance. They were to be made pure, ceremonially and morally, to receive the promised Messiah. But there seems an incongruity in our Lord's being thus purified to prepare for his own reception. His was the coming, on account of which that repentance was preached and that baptism instituted. He was the guest, not the host, the monarch whom the nation was to greet. I confess I see no better solution of this difficulty than the notion of Priestley and others, who have arrived at the conclusion, that he was not fully aware

of his character as the Messiah till the miracle which followed his baptism. Unless this be admitted, where is the propriety of his appearing as one of those who were to be prepared properly to receive himself as the messenger of heaven and Son of God?

The language of John may be supposed to militate against this supposition: "I have need to be baptised of thee, and comest thou to me?" The inquiry seems to recognise the office of Jesus. But even if John knew that Jesus was the promised Messiah, it does not absolutely follow that Jesus himself did at that moment. John had already received, and was acting upon, a divine commission; but Christ had yet to receive his, though but a few minutes elapsed before it was bestowed, and the Spirit was poured forth upon him in a fulness which neither the Baptist nor any other ever possessed. Nay, that he did not seems by his reply: "Thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness." The meaning is evidently ceremonial righteousness, all that was *instituted*. But if our remarks be just, the baptism of John was not instituted for the Messiah, nor, therefore, was submission to it a fulfilling of righteousness in Jesus, if he already considered himself as the Messiah. Further, even John's knowing him yet for the Messiah is doubtful, or rather, we have evidence that he did not. In the gospel of the Evangelist John is preserved the Baptist's testimony to Christ (i. 31-34). He there most positively affirms his not knowing that Jesus was the Messiah till after his baptism: "And I knew him not: but that he should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptising with water. And John bare record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon him. And I knew him not: but he that sent me to baptise with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptiseth with the Holy Spirit. And I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God." This is decisive as to John's previous ignorance of who was the Messiah. Either the account before us must bear an interpretation consistent with that, or the disagreement must be considered as an historical discrepancy, fatal to the plenary inspiration, though not to the general credibility, of the writers. If we reject the latter supposition, then the hesitation of John

can only be ascribed to his high sense of the purity of our Lord's character. He esteemed him too holy to be a proper subject for the baptism of repentance. This interpretation does not seem so natural as that which refers his difficulty to the superior office of Christ. But we cannot adopt the latter without supposing Matthew's account incorrect. The fact, then, of Christ's first at this time ascertaining the high dignity he was to bear is strongly presumable. This does not imply that he had not been led to better notions than others of the nature of the Messiah's kingdom, or that he felt not strong anticipations of having to bear some extraordinary character under divine direction, both which are very probable.

The fact thus ascertained has a bearing on two subjects of critical and theological discussion of some importance. It affects the critical question of the authority of the initial chapters of Matthew and Luke, both which imply such a declaration of the Messiahship of Christ at a much earlier period as is inconsistent with the ignorance either of Jesus or of John. They suppose it announced with a considerable degree of publicity even, and certainly in such a way as to make John's *discovery* of it by the miracle a moral impossibility. The credit, therefore, of one or the other must be relinquished; and that of the disputed chapters is impugned by so many other distinct and independent circumstances, as to leave no hesitation in the choice.

It also bears on the doctrine of the deity of Christ. It shows that, instead of being omniscient, he was, till a certain period, uninformed of the destiny, most glorious, but most perilous, which was reserved for him. To those, indeed, who can reconcile his deity with his avowed ignorance of the day of judgment, this may not seem an insuperable objection. It does, however, present a greater difficulty to their system than even that. I do not advert to the greater or less distance of time of these events, for ignorance of what shall happen ten thousand years hence is full as inconsistent with deity as ignorance of what shall happen tomorrow. The latter may furnish a more striking refutation of the doctrine, but not a more conclusive one. There is a more important difference. The one they interpret of ignorance, as the Messiah, of a future event; the other is, ignorance of the very fact that he was, or was to be, the

Messiah. The one they allege to be ignorance as to his human nature; but the other is ignorance that he had a divine nature, if that were essential to the character of the Messiah. If he were God, he was not himself aware of the fact. It must be reconciled with his unconsciousness. Such are the incongruities which that doctrine introduces into the facts of sacred history.

The next question involved in this passage relates to baptism. It generally betokened discipleship into the faith of the baptiser; and had not Jesus immediately found himself invested with a higher character than that of John, we may presume that he would have become a disciple of the Baptist. That was prevented; and the present seems to have been their only meeting, which took place with the greatest publicity, so that the mutual testimony they bore was clear of any suspicion of confederacy.

There is but one branch of the baptismal controversy on which the narration bears: it decides nothing as to the perpetuity of the practice, or its application to infants or adults; but the fair construction does intimate that, in this instance at least, the mode was immersion. This, indeed, is decidedly favoured by the whole account of John's baptism. The selection of the spot where he was, the terms in which the ceremony is mentioned, and the passage of Christ out of the water, are all evidence which ought to be admitted, and which is clear as far as it goes, though not demonstrative of uniformity, which, however, should be presumed till the contrary is shown. Seeing, as I do, no conclusive proof that baptism ever existed in Christianity as an institution of divine origin and permanent obligation, I consider this as merely an historical question, and certainly think the evidence is in favour of the mode having generally been that of immersion.

The comparison in the following verses of the "dove" has occasioned the picturing of the Spirit of God under that form in those sensible representations of deity which have so much favoured an idolatrous disposition in nominal Christians. It rather appears, however, that not the shape, but the manner of descent, is the subject of that comparison. It came down with the fluttering motion of the dove alighting. Early ecclesiastical tradition says it was a fiery appearance which illumined Jordan and the country round.

This is probable, and corresponds with what took place on the day of Pentecost, when the apostles were, in an analogous manner, invested with their miraculous powers. It has been observed, that here was a sensible manifestation of the three persons of the Trinity. It is such a manifestation as affords little countenance to the doctrine. There was the Spirit; but merely descending as a gift from the Father to the Son; not acting as a person, but bestowed as a property. There was the Son; not as inherently possessing, but receiving that Spirit; not as equal with the Father, but as acquiring official dignity and needful qualifications from that Father's bestowment. And there was the Father; not as one of a coequal three, but alone in divine supremacy, the source and Lord of all.

In the declaration, "This is my beloved Son," three things may be observed. 1st. It describes the office of Christ, as the Son of God. This expression is very variously used; sometimes in reference to the whole human race: all men are his offspring. The illustration of this fact, the display of this universal paternity of God, is the chief glory of Christianity. It is a truth never to be lost sight of, for its consequences are most extensive and important, both on our faith, feelings, and practice; it most powerfully affects all our conclusions, our piety, and our benevolence. It gives a different and a lovelier colouring to the whole religious system of any one who embraces it. The world, and time, and eternity itself, all appear to him in a brighter light and with a glory shed over them which no other doctrine could possibly impart. The expression was, however, often used in more limited senses, and as a term of distinction. Thus it notified the peculiar privileges of the Jews, as conferred in the promise to Abraham, and guaranteed in the Mosaic institutions. It often designates Christians, especially in the epistles, and where the writers were arguing for the possession by believers in Jesus of those privileges which the Jews had claimed as absolutely peculiar. Privileges and character were the two things chiefly implied in it when used distinctively; the one as supposing paternal favours from the Deity, and the other, a filial resemblance to him. Both ideas gave a marked propriety to this designation of the Messiah; as he possessed privilege and authority, and displayed excellence, absolutely

peculiar. He who alone was qualified and appointed to be an authoritative, universal teacher; who alone rose from the dead; who alone was without sin,—was the Son of God, in a sense in which no other human being can share it with him.

2d. This declaration indicates the person; it discriminates between the Baptist and our Lord; this Jesus, not John. The expectation that the latter was the Messiah seems to have been very general, both among his disciples and in the community at large. Among the latter, it seems to have occasioned a deputation to him from the Sanhedrim, to elicit a direct claim or disavowal of the character; among the former, its existence, even after his imprisonment by Herod, occasioned the mission of two of his disciples to Christ to ask if he were "He that should come," or whether they should look for another. Such a personal discrimination was, therefore, highly needful, and may be presumed in the language before us.

The character of the Baptist is of high worth, and a fine model for a reformer. His austere simplicity of manners, especially at his years, was adapted to strike with reverence. Such a man preaching in the wilderness could not be heard without a deep impression by the crowds which resorted thither. His manner was fearless and vehement. He dealt in no measured terms or gentle insinuations. His rebuke was indignant, and even awful. Its force was not frittered away in general declamation. He classed his hearers and their vices, and spoke to each of his own enormities. He came like an accusing spirit from another world, untouched by men's frailties, and unexposed to their retorts, to brand the guilty, and humble the proud, and reform the nation. His preaching passed over the land like a thunder-storm, while the ministry of Christ came like the gentle shower that follows it. In the contrast between the character of John and that of Jesus, and the selection of such a one as the latter for the Messiah, we trace the wisdom and the benignity of Providence. He had all the firmness of the Baptist. He lacked nothing of his love of virtue or hatred of sin. But he showed more pity for the sinner, more tenderness for the erring, more brotherhood towards man. He was not less pure, and it was not the purity of separation, but that, more illustrious,

which mingles with the erring, yet is unpolluted. John pitched his tent in the remote wilderness; but the Evangelist says of Christ, that "he tabernacled among us." Their characters were marked by differences analogous to those of the scenery in which their early years were passed. John was the child of the wilderness. He was brought up at a distance from society, and was more familiar with the face of nature than with that of man. The rock was his couch, and the woods were his shelter, and the elements his companions and playmates; and beneath the naked heavens was the sabbath temple of his solitary worship. It is probable that he was, at an early age, an orphan, and loved the desert which received and sheltered him in its dreariness, and it became a congenial home to his stern and lofty mind. Jesus was nurtured in a family, and that family lived in society. A mother's arms were around him, a father's care was over him, and brethren—near relatives at least, if not brethren literally—accompanied his youthful progress. The nature in which *he* lived was subdued and softened and fertilised by man. And he had youthful companions and aged monitors; and the people of the village knew him; and he communed with humanity, and felt the touch of sympathy, and heard the voice of praise, and went with the multitude to the synagogue and the temple; and he grew in favour with God and man. And when public view was fixed on the Baptist, it beheld one who seemed to scorn men's effeminacy, and not to feel some of their wants, and not to heed others, and to have no dependence on his fellow-creatures; and his food and clothing, his vest of camels' hair, his leathern girdle, his locusts and wild honey, were all such as the wilderness readily supplied; while Jesus adopted the more usual food and raiment of his countrymen, as neither superior to their infirmities nor indifferent to their enjoyments. And while John only came over society like a comet, filling with dismay, not seeming to belong to the system which he threatened, and having intercourse with men but to denounce their vices and alarm their fears, Jesus rose upon their dwellings like the daily and nightly lights of heaven. When marriage spread the feast of gladness in their halls, he was there; and when anxiety prepared the couch of sickness, or death made a house of mourning, still he was there. John's lan-

guage partook of his own stern simplicity: his discourses were brief, impassioned, full of denunciation; while the general character of our Lord's was a melting compassion, winning the sinner to relent and the penitent to hope; and often was there thrown over his doctrine a lovely veil of allegory, which, while it hid nothing from the understanding, would spare the feelings much of irritation. John wrought no miracles; if he had, to have comported with his character, they must have been miracles of judgment: Christ did, and his were miracles of mercy. In the Baptist was personified the sternness of the law, in Christ the benignity of the gospel. However just our veneration for the former, however admirable the adaptation of his character to his peculiar duty, and whatever the propriety of its imitation in some emergencies,—there can be no doubt of the advantage of that of Christ for the more important station which he held. He was to be not merely the reformer of Jews, but the saviour of men. In the one, national peculiarities, and the qualifications which that nation's state particularly required, were to be boldly thrown out; in the other, there was a similar propriety in their being kept subordinate to qualities which act upon the universal sympathies and wants of mankind. Accordingly, we always think of John as a Jew; but it is usually with something of effort, with a direct reference to the historical fact, with a feeling that, though it was undoubtedly so, yet we are limiting what was naturally universal, that we think or speak of Jesus under that appellation. It is assigning to one country what belonged to the world. This is just the sensation with which one sent to save the world should be regarded. It increases the power of his instructions. They spread beyond a local and temporary application. We read them as discourses to ourselves, not as the mere historical record of discourses to others. They are the common language of nature and the human heart. The lapse of ages does not diminish their force or veil their beauties. In his pleadings we feel that so he would, and so he does, plead with us. With such friendliness he wins *our* affections and charms us to our own good. The mediator between God and men is not the Jew, but the man Christ Jesus. He sprang from their earth; but he enlightens all countries. He was born of their race; but he is the desire of all

nations. It is well that the faith of all should be connected with him, and their hopes also. We seem to recognise a more complete identity, a closer fraternity, than merely that of a common mortal nature with him, and pass the more readily from his resurrection to the universal resurrection. He cannot be separated from the objects of his heart's benevolence. Where he is, there shall we be also.

We enter readily into the third topic which I observed in my text—that he is the beloved Son of God, in whom he is well pleased; for he is beloved of men, and all who can estimate goodness must be well pleased in him. A religion is commended to our reason which shows such a character as the object of the highest complacency to the Deity, and prescribes its imitation as the means of arriving at the best blessings, rather than forms and observances which bear no intrinsic worth, and conduce to no public utility. Too much has the notion been cherished in the world of placating the Deity by rites which did no good to any, but often fearful mischief; too common, even in such countries as this, are the separation, in fancy, of religion and morality, and the making of the former something else than a rational piety and active benevolence. The union, the identity of religion and morality, is the spirit of the gospel. The God of Christianity is only reverenced by those who work righteousness. Love is the fulfilling of its law. The recorded complacency of the Father in Christ will extend to all who become like him. He is alike the pattern of our conduct and of our recompense. Virtue suffering with resignation, and persevering through opposition,—sinking, perhaps, but sinking to revive in the glory of divine approval,—is his history and the history of the world. The lesson is simple, and all may read it; important, and it should sink into the heart; most interesting, and it should regulate the life. It is the one great lesson of nature, reason, history, and Christianity; he who has practically learned it is wise unto salvation. All creeds and rituals are worthless, and worse than worthless, in its absence or neglect. It is to us, and all, a voice from heaven, which calls us thither. If we are obedient to its dictates, he who proclaimed his approbation of Jesus, his beloved Son, will acknowledge us his children also, and bid us enter with him into everlasting habitations.

The baptism or doctrine of John was that of national reformation as preparatory to the reception of the promised Messiah, in his real character, and not in that fallacious view of his kingdom which the Jews generally entertained. This must be borne in mind to appreciate properly his personal qualities, his ministry, and its connection with that of Christ. His rebuke of each class that presented itself to him was not merely that of vice as affecting their moral state and their condition after death, but was directed against that which peculiarly prevented their recognition of Jesus as the Christ. The pride of the Pharisees, the extortion of the publicans, the violence of the soldiery, were all censured by him in this view; not so much as obstacles to the final salvation of the individual, as because they would lead to the rejection of Jesus, and consequently to the destruction of the Jewish nation. It was as if some one should now arise in Christendom to herald the figurative dominion of Christ over the kingdoms of the earth by the prevalence of the principles of his gospel. That which he rebuked would have the stamp of vice, and bring its punishment hereafter; but he would denounce it for its mischiefs here. He would tell monarchs that they must humble themselves before the King of kings, and show their reverence to him not by pompous professions, but by devotion to his creatures' good. Licentiousness, vindictiveness, or ambition, though robed in purple, would crouch before his appalling menace. He would tell legislators that they should tremble to make public laws for private purposes, and sacrifice a nation's well-being to their sycophancy or cupidity. He would demand of sacerdotal dignity to resign its titles, and revoke its anathemas, and unclench its avaricious grasp, and unlock its dungeons. He would tell the commercial spirit that neither private honour nor public faith, the rights of nations nor the interests of humanity, should be longer sacrificed at the shrine of Mammon. He would tell the warrior that no name or decoration could wash the stain of murder from the sword of an hireling, drawn, by whatever command, in an unrighteous cause. And, as in the case of the Baptist, the first proclamation of such truth would be astounding; and then men would take breath, and begin to consider rather how to silence the prophet than to reform the evil; and with the name of the Baptist

sainted in their mouths, they would soon copy Herod, save with the adoption of some more decorous expedient. Of such a nature, with reference to Judea and its peculiar constitution, was John's task; and Providence as admirably qualified him for it by his sternness, as Christ was qualified by his gentleness of wisdom for being the proffered saviour from the calamities denounced.

The fitness of the individual for his peculiar task is to be traced in all the conspicuous characters of sacred history. It shows the agency of Providence in the formation of character as well as in the conduct of events. The enduring meekness of Moses; his capability, rich as he was in the highest accomplishments of the age, to bear with ignorance, perversity, and barbarism; his wisdom, which no exigency could baffle; and his generous patriotism, which no provocation could exhaust,—marked him for the leader of Israel from Egypt, and their lawgiver in the wilderness. He was the man to emancipate a degraded race, and organise them into a powerful nation. The early prowess of David, his personal recommendations to popularity as a warrior and a minstrel, his skill acquired in self-defence when hunted like a hart on the mountains, enabled him to conduct the Jews to independence and conquest; while the milder genius of Solomon, his love of peace and literature and splendour, grafted on the results of those military exploits the highest prosperity that Israel ever enjoyed. Elijah, the prototype of the Baptist in office, was so in character also; Peter, the first preacher of Christianity to the Gentiles, but not their permanent apostle, was the most reverenced by the Jewish Christians, the most fitted to subdue their aversion from that new but benevolent combination; and Paul, who was to carry on the work, had a dexterity of argument, an eloquence, and an acquaintance with Greek literature, which conspicuously designated him for that arduous mission. This fact illustrates not only the power and wisdom of God, but the duty of man. The good man will perceive in the dispositions, talents, and acquirements which he owes to Providence, indications of the kind of service which he may and ought to render to his fellow-creatures. Let no man say he is destined to be useless in the world. It would be a reflection on his Maker if true; it *is* a reflection on his own ignorance or indolence.

In some way or other, all can benefit society. The sincere desire will soon ascertain the most efficient means, be they by tongue or pen, by word or deed, by private or public effort, by solitary endeavour or ready coöperation. That complex result which we call character indicates the design of its formation as surely as the organs of sense do theirs. Without a special divine commission, merely by the consciousness of what he was and could effect, Christ might have employed the language which he used to Pilate: "To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice."

Sermon VI.—The Temptation of Christ.

"Then was Jesus led up of the spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil" (Matt. iv. 1).

At his baptism "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the holy spirit and with power." He then, and thereby, became the Christ or Messiah,—terms which simply mean the Anointed. He entered on his office with all its dignities and perils, its labours, sufferings, and promised recompense. He was the Sent of God for the deliverance of Israel, if Israel would hear his voice; and for the salvation of all nations by his instructions and example, his revelations of the divine character and proclamation of the divine mercy, and especially by his resurrection from the dead as the exhibition of man's universal destiny to revived and immortal being.

By this anointing he became King or Judge—terms of course to be taken figuratively, as the anointing itself was figurative; but of which, in this case, the figurative meaning is far nobler than the literal, as the unction of miraculous power and wisdom is above that of material oil, by whatever forms consecrated, or to whatever post of earthly greatness it may typify the setting apart of the individual. King and Judge were very nearly, if not altogether, convertible terms among the Jews. The judicial function was exercised in person by their sovereigns, and esteemed their most important duty; and "judge" had

for a considerable period been the designation of their rulers. Their kings judged, and their judges reigned. The language of our Lord, and of the New Testament generally on this topic, was the result of their history, their institutions, and their habits. His kingdom came—for during his personal ministry it was only announced as "at hand"—in the outpouring of the spirit of miraculous power after his ascension, by which his claims were vindicated and his influence established; it was awfully manifested in that great judicial act, the destruction of Jerusalem and the dispersion of the Jews for rejecting him; it was at the same time graciously displayed in the preservation of the believers who, in consequence of his prophetic warnings, had previously retired from the devoted city, and thus were saved by faith in him; it continues in the moral power of his religion in the world; each individual enters it at death when he receives according to the deeds done in the body; and it shall finally become universal in the extinction of sin, suffering, and mortality. Such was the glorious sovereignty to which he was destined. This judgment was committed to him as "the Son of Man." The prophecy of Daniel had connected that appellation with dominion. He attained it by death and resurrection, which implied his human constitution. And not more by nature than by the tenderness of his feelings and the universality of his sympathies was he the brother of humankind.

There was also a prophetic and a sacerdotal unction, though the practice was much less common. Christ was "anointed to preach the gospel;" and though his religion involved the abolition of the Mosaic priesthood, he was himself a far more prevailing intercessor; by his spotless obedience, even unto the death of the cross, he offered the noblest of all sacrifices: and thus is he "the great High-Priest of our profession."

A divine monition sent him from the scene of baptism into the deeper recesses of the wilderness for forty days, there to exercise and train and strengthen his mind for a work which humanity could never hope to accomplish but by the especial guidance and support of God. Of what passed in that seclusion, of his mental conflicts, trials, and triumphs, we have a figurative description in the passage which the text introduces, and which has just been read.

I take the narrative to describe a real transaction; for a vision of divine instruction would not have been a temptation; and if we were to consider the passage as a parable, still, as many of the parables are believed, on very probable grounds, to relate facts, least of all could we doubt its being so in the present instance, where there is an express assertion that such was the case.

And I call the description figurative, for its literal interpretation involves both physical impossibility and moral absurdity: physical impossibility, in the alleged exhibition of all the kingdoms of the earth from the top of a mountain in Judea; and moral absurdity, in the personality and agency ascribed to the devil. The scenes and actions of the temptation were internal, not external; they were not in the surrounding wilderness, but in his own mind; *there* was felt the want, the doubt, the desire; there were presented the inducements; there rose the suggestion; there was achieved the repulse; there struggled the adversary, till he was put to flight and shame; and there, in peaceful and blissful emotions, did angels minister to the exhausted but victorious combatant.

If we advert to the previous circumstances of Jesus, to the opinions and condition of his countrymen, and to the work which he now became aware that "the Father had given him to do," it will appear that some such temptations as these must have been encountered by him at the commencement of his public life. He was born, brought up, and had passed about thirty years of his life, in a state of poverty. The tradition of Christian antiquity is highly probable, that the carpenter's son had habitually laboured with his own hands. During his forty days' seclusion in the wilderness, he fasted; that is to say, he was without any regular supply of food. What would come in his way there without exertion—for his attention would be fixed on the one all-absorbing subject on which he had retired thither to meditate—would be but scanty in quantity and poor in quality. His frame began to feel the debilitating and depressing consequences which would naturally follow. These would extend themselves to his intellect. Not only would the cravings of hunger attempt to lord it over his mind and will, and demand by some means or other their instant gratification, but gloomy views would arise of the privations

and hardships of his future life. He would look around, but see only the stones of the desert. Some of them, it may be, to an imagination thus affected by the body, would present a resemblance to loaves of bread. The idea of their transformation would occur; and with it the full consciousness of his recent endowment with miraculous power for the accomplishment of his mission would rush strongly upon his mind. Why not make trial of that power now, by employing it to create the means of bodily support? This was the first temptation. Thus "the tempter came to him, and said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread." How many would have yielded! How many would not have reflected that the spirit was given simply and exclusively for the great objects of a public work, a divine mission! How many would not at such an instant have been impressed with the conviction that the God who called him to devote himself, soul and body, to that work, would never fail of providing the means of supporting his natural existence through it! How many would have felt, in such circumstances, their minds drawn in any direction rather than to the general principle, that it is not by inherent sufficiency, but by the divine will, that food is the means of sustaining life! But thus did his thoughts and feelings rise above the trial, and he answered and said, "It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God;" by any means which God ordains, or without external means, if he so will. And so his mind again grew calm and clear and confiding; and if the bodily suffering continued, it was unfelt and powerless over his thoughts, and he was triumphant.

But out of the materials of this temptation, even in their dispersion, grew another, and one yet more plausible. If every thing personal is to be sacrificed to this one public object, why not proceed to its instant realisation? Is the world to be saved in this scene of solitude and desolation? If my newly granted powers must be dormant here, why not go where they may be exercised with a grand and decisive publicity? Why am I here alone in the wilderness, when I might be addressing Jerusalem's countless multitudes, and at once commanding their reverential reception of my words by some signal miracle? The transition was

one which, probably, the mind of many an anchorite in the dark ages felt, from the pressure of animal wants to the power of spiritual pride. This devil in his thoughts "taketh him," in imagination, "up into the holy city, and setteth him on a pinnacle of the temple, and saith unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down; for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone."

But reflection speedily detected the personal leaven that mingled in the scheme. It would have been most conducive to his own aggrandisement, but was not best adapted to the nature of his mission. It would have astonished the Jews rather than have converted them; their minds would have been prostrated rather than enlightened. He could not bring their acceptance or rejection of him to such an instant crisis. A longer trial, a more gradual process, a less obtrusive course, was required by the very nature of the work. He had no right to anticipate the plan of heaven. He had no right to reckon on supernatural protection in such a scheme of rashness and assumption. In following the longer and lowlier path which divine illumination marked out for him, he might be assured that not even famine should affect his life; but in deviating from that, he could not be assured that miracle would preserve it. It would not be meekly relying upon God, but presumptuously demanding his supernatural interposition. And he said, "It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God."

Driven off in this way from the contemplation of an immediate, striking, miraculous appeal to the great mass of the population, how natural it was that the thoughts of Jesus should next point towards something savouring of worldly policy! The Roman emperors were lords of the kingdoms of the earth, giving and taking away crowns and sceptres at their pleasure. The instances were frequent, and some of them had perhaps affected his mind, in which this supremacy was exercised. There were Jews called Herodians, from holding that one of the Herods—it does not appear which—was the Messiah. The first had received the diadem from Augustus; the one that now was tetrarch of Galilee was afterwards refused it by Caius. Why should

not Jesus, the true Messiah, make political power the agency of his allotted work? Why should he not claim and gain from imperial Rome the sceptre of the house of David? There was something dazzling in the prospect, and the throne of David was his inheritance. His mind was beginning to expatiate in its brilliance and its extent: "the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and showeth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them;" and then there came the recollection, and the momentary consideration, of the idolatrous homage to Cæsar's majesty which all these tributary sovereigns rendered: that was indispensable; that was the price;—the devil said: "All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me;" and the servant of Jehovah, the chosen prophet of the Divine Unity, was indignant at his own brief hesitation, and said to the evil thought, "Get thee behind me, Satan; for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve."

And then the vanquished adversary departed, as Luke says, "for a season." He came again at the close of our Lord's ministry, in the "hour of the powers of darkness," when he prayed in his agony that the cup of suffering might pass from him; and again were the suggestions of human infirmity quelled by strength from heaven.

Truly may his disciples say that "he was tempted like as we are;" would that it could be added, that they had always, both collectively and individually, been alike victorious. Often have they had occasion to offer the prayer for daily bread, and often has their faith failed in the apprehension lest it should not be answered. And better that it should not, than that the means of animal subsistence should be purchased at the expense of truth and conscience. "We must live," is the apology of some, for remaining ministers of churches whose creeds they even more than doubt; of others, for abstaining from a religious profession which agrees with their mental convictions, but not with their temporal prospects; and of others, for continuing in occupations and practices which, however unquestioned by the world, are not tolerated by Christian morality. A Christian full of the holy spirit of his Master does not covet life on such conditions, and the fact of their exaction is much more commonly the imagination of a weak heart

than the alternative to which we are actually reduced by Providence. It is rarely, indeed, that the means of existence are not to be had—honest and honourable ones; though indolence may shrink from the requisite toil, worldly pride disdain the fancied degradation, and the craving appetite confound necessities with comparative wealth or luxury. Base compliances, unworthy silence, and arts and tricks whose sanction is custom, and not justice—when of such stones as these men make their bread, it is no wonder that their souls thrive not. It is not life they live; for that "consisteth not in the abundance of things which a man possesseth;" nor is it supported "by bread alone, but by every word which proceedeth out of the mouth of God."

The apostles were called to a complete abandonment of temporal cares. They took "no thought for the morrow," and God made each morrow as it came "take thought for the things of itself;" and "sufficient unto the day" was not only "the evil thereof," but the bread thereof. We must take thought for the morrow; but that thought should be not only for its temporal needs, but for the equal necessities of mind: thought, that it may bring something for the intellect, something for the heart, something for growth in grace and knowledge, and increasing meetness for the inheritance of the saints in light. These are the life of God in the soul of man.

And how often has the revulsion been felt from despondency to presumption; from unwarrantable doubt of the ordinary kindness of Providence to unwarrantable reliance on its extraordinary interposition; from despairing of daily food for man's own body to aspiring after permanent dominion over others' minds! The second temptation speedily followed the first, in the history of the church. Even in the age of miracles, and even by the apostles and commissioned disciples themselves, "little faith" was sometimes shown in divine care for their support; and yet no sooner had that power ceased, than Christians began to reckon on its possession; affected not only in fraud, but in honest enthusiasm, its continued exercise; and opened, theoretically and practically, a source of deception, imposition, presumption, and spiritual domination, which embitters, and will embitter, the waters of the river of life, till,

in their continued flowing, they regain their native purity. In the unbridled eagerness of ignorant zeal, or the unholy daring of sectarian ambition, how often have men cast themselves down from the pinnacle of God's temple, vainly trusting that the purity and piety of their souls would be upheld from harm; but sorely suffering, even though the world gave them the great name and power they sought! Xavier and Calvin and Wesley—what are they to what they should and might and would have been, had they continued, as they probably commenced, in a simple devotedness to God's glory and man's good, instead of trying the achievements by which they conquered for themselves the laurels of spiritual ascendency? The follower of Christ should learn from the temptations of his Master, that Providence needs not our personal agency or influence in religion; that it will not accommodate itself to that mode of advancing truth which may most employ or most dignify our efforts; and that to rely on extraordinary support or extraordinary success is only to "tempt the Lord our God." While miracles were vouchsafed, it was generally not his will that they should be of that splendid and overpowering kind which man's wisdom might have thought the best; and now that they have long and finally ceased, it is less excusable than ever to reckon on any other process for benefiting the world or individuals than that established by the laws of mind, the slow one of reason, conviction, persuasion, and the gradually extending influence of divine knowledge.

Not that this should entangle us in the third snare, and make us follow in the long train of those who have contaminated the gospel by selling it into slavery to the governments of earth, and purchasing their patronage by subservience to their crooked policy. Christianity needs not the riches of the kingdoms of this world, nor their glory; and the homage it must do for them, though no longer in form, is still substantially an idolatry. "Get thee hence, Satan," should have been the unhesitating reply of every church to every political authority that wanted to purchase, by dignities and endowments, its influence over the community. The political incorporation of religion is a vain attempt to serve two masters—the temporal and the spiritual. They have always clashed. Religion has always been polluted

and degraded by the connection. Christ's kingdom is not of this world, and cannot coalesce with the kingdoms of this world. The gods of the earth will have their worship from their dependents; but "thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve."

It may be observed that the mind of Christ was so thoroughly imbued with scripture, it had been so much the object of his attention, his meditation, and the appropriating exercise of his intellect, that he even thought in its words; and each tempting suggestion, and each holy resolution, rises alike clothed in its language. His moral being had been formed by the word of God, and was identified with it; and he was "the word made flesh." And it was not the mere letter, but the spirit, that was embodied in him. To a mere textuary, the temptations and the refutations, coming in this same form, would have balanced each other. He had imbibed those everlasting principles which preserve the mind from being mystified by consecrated phraseology. Hence his lofty and expanded views, his prompt perception of duty, and the absence of cloud or speck from his illustrious course of beneficence.

How vainly do men think of shunning temptation; and especially by withdrawing from the exertions and intercourse of social life! His severest temptations were in the wilderness. He had not fled there to avoid them; if he had, they would have been more likely to prevail. They are never to be courted, never rashly and needlessly encountered—indeed, then they have been already yielded to; but they are not to be shrunk from in the path of duty; they are to be regarded as the discipline by which heaven trains us to firmness, excellence, and usefulness. All moral greatness in man supposes their previous agency. Without them, there might have been innocence, but there would not have been virtue. Without passing through those to which he was exposed at the commencement of his ministry, we can scarcely imagine that Christ would, as he did, have fulfilled that ministry. But trials occasioned by others touched him not, because in the workings of his own mind they had been anticipated. He was forearmed. The enemy within was subdued, and foes without had become powerless. And thus should we prepare ourselves for trials; and in this spirit should we meet and vanquish them. We have only to

follow the track of his footsteps through the perilous path. For by the record of his own conflicts, as well as by the declarations and influences of his doctrine, we find that "in that he himself hath suffered, being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted."

And now that the season of preparatory reflection had passed, that of public exertion immediately commenced. He returned from the wilderness to the abodes of men. Hearing of the imprisonment of the Baptist, he departed into Galilee; and then "the people which sat in darkness saw great light; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death, light sprung up;" for "from that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand:" or, according to the account in Mark, "the time is fulfilled" —the time which prophecy announced for the coming of the Messiah. It would have been interesting to have on record at length the first discourse which he delivered. The Sermon on the Mount is by many considered as a collection of instructions given at different times. To me it reads much more like one discourse; it commences with general principles, in the beatitudes; draws them out into a variety of particulars, which contrast in detail the eternal morality taught by him with the practical corruptions of the Pharisees; and concludes with a solemn declaration of the necessity of such righteousness, and its sole availableness in the time of trial and of judgment. It is a perfect whole, with a single object constantly pursued and strongly enforced. But it has not the character of a first discourse. There most likely preceded it a more direct declaration of his mission and its objects; an assertion and establishment of authority before he applied that authority to the reformation of morals. Conjecture has a guide, for we know what he first said in his public character at Nazareth; and we may infer that he commenced his ministry in the same manner. According to Luke, "he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up; and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up for to read. And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Esaias. And when he had opened the book, he found the place where it is written, The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-

hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord." How beautiful is this passage in itself; how exquisitely appropriate would it have been, merely quoted in accommodation; and how pertinent was it as a prediction! Well might it introduce "gracious words" from him who spake as never man spake. Surely this must have been his first theme; the holy taper from which he kindled that light which was to irradiate the world. It breathes all the benevolence and piety of his personal character; it includes the objects of his heavenly mission; it paints the benignant spirit and influence of his gospel; and its metaphors are well drawn from the noblest institution of Judaism and the best feelings of humanity: fit terms in which to proclaim the spiritual and everlasting jubilee of the human race.

What a moment of intense feeling to himself must that have been in which Christ began to preach! It is only by the recollection of the strongest sensations in their own lives, and by that analogy, that faith in the universally similar constitution of man, however varied by circumstances, to which we must have recourse, that any conception of it can be formed by others. How faint must the conception be, after all! He who has entered in mature life on some public and important course of action will never forget his emotions on the occasion; he will look back to them, and analyse them, and revive them, and ponder on their complexity and their force; and though all sensations lose their freshness and fade from their vividness, yet will they glimmer on his mind through the long vista of years, and be extinguished but in the grave. So must it have been with Christ at that time, though after events would agitate with yet deeper emotion, and thus displace in some degree the impression; and the absolute peculiarity of his circumstances would have some corresponding peculiarity of feeling. But so, with these varieties, must it then have been with him. I cannot imagine even his exalted mind engaging in such a task without intense anxiety.

What immense consequences were to result from the words he was about to utter, both to himself, his hearers, and ultimately to the remotest nations and ages! He was then committing himself to the awful trial. From that

instant, there was no shrinking back, no temporising, no deviating a hair's-breadth from the path which led to glory but by the cross and the grave. It was a fearful plunge into a stormy ocean of prejudice, passion, and persecution. He saw the foaming billows which would be allowed to pass over his head, and spend on him their fury. From the first syllable he uttered, he was at war with all that was powerful in his country, in its rulers or its populace. They were his enemies to the death, and beyond that, had it been possible for human malice to baffle Divine Providence, and to blast him as an impostor. He was alone; and not in his native abode, not in the friendliness of neighbourhood, not in the affection of relationship, was he to find support. For some time, at least, "his brethren believed not on him." The words he uttered would even sever him from them. And in what a character was he to speak! How imposing its dignity, if recognised; how detested his supposed presumption, where it was not acknowledged! How solicitous must he have been to be, in action and in speech, all that it required! How would the conviction, that now his lot was cast, and his destiny of anguish and of final glory decided; the sensation of taking the first step, beyond which there was only to go on, through all events, to the end; the thought that an awful responsibility, of temporal and more than temporal nature, hung over his hearers' heads; the laceration of ties of kindred or country, to be soon torn by the rejection of his claims, and the visitations of heaven for that crime; the melting pity which his heart felt for the wretchedness which he saw, and that of a wider circle which his mind depicted; the fervent benevolence that flowed so strongly, and spread so widely, in his generous bosom; the humble piety that enabled him to confide in God for every thing, and, acting under his direction, to merge all fears and hopes in filial reliance on his omnipotence;—how must all these emotions have then mingled and swelled within, too mighty even for his utterance, as they are for the grasp of our imagination!

What a moment was that for Judea! Then came on the great trial of the seed of Abraham. Then was the nation tested, and obedience or disobedience was to decide its fate for many a revolving century. Then were they to fill up the measure of their fathers' iniquities, and the land was to be

smitten with a curse, or all past offences were to be obliterated by one great act of submission to heaven. Never was there, in any other people's history, so awful a crisis of their fate. The blessing and the curse were before them, and they were rushing blindfold to the choice. The temper in which they heard was the commencement of a determination whether the temple should stand, or be annihilated; whether Jerusalem should flourish, or the fire devour its buildings, and the plough pass over the soil on which it rested; whether the nation should remain in the smile of heaven, or become the scorn and byword of the earth. They did decide. They are in their eighteenth century of rejection and degradation.

What a moment was that for the world, little as the world then heeded it! Monarchs were issuing their decrees; and priests were officiating in their temples; and philosophers were teaching in their schools; and politicians were immersed in the fancied profundity of their schemes and the far-sightedness of their calculations; and poets were singing their country's gods and their country's eternal glory; and the ambitious were shaping and fixing the steps of the ladder that ascends to power; and the Epicureans were revelling on their couches at their banquets; and slaves were crouching in the dungeon, or howling under the lash; and the multitude of Rome was applauding the bloody sport of the amphitheatre; and that of Corinth was shaming the brute creation in the unbridled license of sensuality; and that of Ephesus was glorifying Diana; and that of Athens hearing or seeking some new thing: and what peals of ridicule would have overwhelmed the impertinent absurdity (as they would have deemed it), had any uttered it, that in the petty country of Judea, or in the little contemptible province of Galilee, an obscure peasant, the son of a carpenter, was then beginning to preach, and by that act beginning the subversion of the Roman empire, the revolution of its manners, its philosophy, its religion; the completest change from what then was that could be conceived, and to which all other convulsions were comparatively unworthy the notice of history! Yet so it was. They were in all their pride, and pomp, and fame, and luxury, and seeming durability; and he apparently as little to be heeded, by the powers that be, as the meanest itinerant who in some remote village may

gather, in street or field, a peasant auditory around him: and now, they are a pile of ruin, at the base of his cross, and their history is ransacked to afford illustrations for a sentence of the record of his sermons.

What a moment was that for us! Here are we assembled in the name of Christ, and with that name blending the sense of what is most dear and pleasurable here, and the prospect of a life, an immortality, hereafter; finding in his discourse materials for faith and hope and obedience; placing him before us as a perfect model to shame our failings and stimulate our virtues; with many a charity rising around us, and many a feeling glowing within us, which we can only call Christian; no day of our existence, no action, no relation of life, no retirement in solitude or mingling with society, in which we are not aware, on reflection, that in some degree or other it springs from, or is modified by, Christianity; and that was the commencement of Christianity, the first link in the chain that enfolds us round and binds us with society, and draws us on into an interminable but blessed futurity.

What a moment was that for the human race! Then began the seed of the woman to crush the serpent's head. Then arose the principle of good, in its brightness, to restrain and subdue and annihilate the principle of evil. By man had come death, and then by man was coming the resurrection of the dead. Sin had abounded, and then came grace to superabound. God had spoken by servants; then spake he by his Son, commanding "all men every where to repent." Then flowed the words which are spirit and life, and which the Father spoke by Christ. Then came plain instruction, and holy precepts, and precious promises, and affectionate persuasions, and solemn warnings, and heart-soothing consolations, and all the inspiring splendour of immortal hopes. Then began Jehovah to triumph gloriously over the false deities of long ages and mighty nations. Then commenced the proclamation of pardon and remission of sins, on repentance, to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. Then first was that voice publicly heard, which soon reached even the ear of death, and which will penetrate the whole dominion of the grave, and pronounce the sentence of a judged world, and call on the Father to receive and bless a restored universe. All, and for ever,

have the deepest interest in the results of that moment. Swiftly did it pass in the ever-flowing current of time; firmly will those results abide on the rock of eternity.

Sermon VII.—The Excellence of Christ's Preaching.

"Never man spake like this man" (John vii. 46).

It can rarely have happened, even to the best instructors of mankind that ever lived, to receive a testimony to their excellence so strong as this, when we consider the persons by whom it was uttered, the situation in which they were placed, the mission from which they had just returned, and the auditory to which it was addressed. This just, emphatic, and noble description of Christ's preaching was given by the officers of the Sanhedrim,—its messengers, agents, underlings, who had been sent to apprehend him and bring him before their masters, who found him in the temple teaching the people, and listened till their hearts failed them, and their hands shrank from the profanation of laying violent hold on his person,—and who returned and made this reply to the chief priests and Pharisees, then sitting as the supreme council of the nation, inflated with the pride of authority, and inflamed with the rage of persecution. In the course of our Lord's public ministry there were many testimonies from very different classes of hearers to the moral power of his teaching; but in some points of view this may be regarded as exceeding them all; and as no other teacher spake like him, we may almost be tempted to add that no other hearers praised like them. Children raised their feeble voices in hosannas to the son of David; and women sat at his feet and ministered to his wants; and youths followed in the train of his disciples: but children, youths, and women may be supposed to have been borne away by the impulse of guileless, unsuspecting, generous feeling; while the officers of a judicial court would, from the very nature of their customary occupation, contract something of hardness and callousness; they would be comparatively unimpressible; they would have learned in their obdurate vocation to make a merit of stopping their ears to the voice of the charmer, charmed he ever so

wisely; and it must have been no common strain which awoke such a response in their rough bosoms. Some of those who listened eagerly to Jesus had been the objects of his miraculous power before they were the hearers of his discourses; his works of beneficence had with them preceded his words of wisdom; his healing their bodily diseases had predisposed them to admit and admire his interposition to heal the diseases of their minds, their ignorance, errors, and prejudices. They would hear him under the influence of gratitude. Far more easily obtained, and therefore less powerful when given, would be their declaration that "grace was on" those "lips" which had said, "Thy sins are forgiven thee, take up thy bed and walk," "Receive thy sight," "Be thou whole," than a similar confession from those who do not appear to have been subjects, or even witnesses, of his beneficent miracles. There were no such grateful recollections to prepare their hearts for the glad and ready welcoming of his word. Others who hung delightedly on his discourses were persons of fervent piety, and who, like Simeon and Anna, had been waiting, with longing hearts, for the redemption of Israel. They were beginning to believe that they had found him of whom Moses and the prophets had spoken, and that Jesus of Nazareth was the Son of God. The divinity of his mission and the importance of his work were opening upon their minds, and they would listen with an awe and reverence which we cannot ascribe to those who, being in constant contact with, and acting in habitual subservience to, the hypocritical and ambitious and worldly faction which then prevailed in the Sanhedrim, were, in all probability, contaminated with its spirit. The pure, spiritual, and elevated piety of Jesus would meet in the one with congeniality to recommend it, in the other with uncongeniality to resist and be triumphed over. Some of the admiring hearers of Christ were persons, if not of affluent, yet of independent stations. They could support themselves; they could minister to him. They formed and acted upon their opinions freely. Their minds could judge of what he taught, and how he taught, without being perplexed by temporal apprehensions. Their praise was an honourable, and should be a convincing, tribute; but an inferior degree of excellence would command it, compared with that which would be

required to extort the praise of those who were under authority, and who ate the bread of dependence; who lived by satisfying their superiors; who spoke at the peril of dismissal and distress; and whose very thoughts must have partaken of the slavery of their condition.

Again, we find that there were Greeks who were struck with admiration of Jesus, and desired acquaintance with his person. Jews, perhaps, born and educated in Greece, and partaking in some degree of its literary refinement, or native Greeks who had been proselyted. Independently of the religious principle, they might have been charmed by the beauty, the exquisite beauty, of some of his discourses, —some of the parables, for instance,—which the poetry, eloquence, and philosophy of that illustrious country might have enabled them to appreciate, though all its stores would not enable them to eclipse or parallel. On these the simplicity, the ingenuity, the pathos, the persuasiveness, would, merely as qualities of the speaker, have an effect which scarcely any home-bred Jew would be impressed with: and least of all such as spent their lives in the service of the Sanhedrim, apprehending and guarding supposed criminals, attending executions, and even in the most humane and least offensive part of their employment being as remote as possible from any thing which could purify the taste or expand the intellect. Many of Christ's hearers were Galileans, and others were persons who lived, locally or by station, remote from what there was of grand or imposing in the Jewish polity. Attended by his apostles, followed by a multitude, claiming and believed to be a prophet, even all the simplicity and humility of the man of Nazareth probably did not prevent their feeling somewhat of that deference which such people usually render to external superiority. The officers, on the other hand, familiar with the leading men of their nation, accustomed to the assemblage of its councils and the parade of its dignities, in personal intercourse with the Sanhedrim, the chief priests, and the pontiff himself, the high-priest, the political and religious head of the descendants of Abraham,— would, as to all that was external, regard him with contempt. The only impression on them would be one of superciliousness towards the Nazarene carpenter's son. And to this—of itself how mighty an obstacle for a teacher

to struggle with!—would be added a yet stronger emotion of opposition, almost of hatred, derived from the views and apprehensions of their masters. Jesus was regarded as the enemy, and in intention the destroyer, of the power of those masters. They were entering on a conflict of which the ruin of one party was to be the termination. These men came even now as instruments to strike the first blow in this warfare of vengeance. What must have been the power which sent them back, softened, humbled, apologising for themselves, and eulogising him! That they said it, is a conclusive proof and a beautiful illustration of the fact, that "never man spake like this man."

We are happily not left to infer the fitness of Christ for a universal instructor, and his supreme excellence in that character, from this record of the effect produced on one occasion; though that was a most decisive one. Without adverting to the many other cases of actual impression, we go to the instructions themselves, so far as they are preserved to us by the Evangelists. The materials are sufficient for the formation of our own judgments. For the formation of our judgments! that indeed is saying little; and were that all, the discussion would be trifling: they are sufficient, if reason be not dormant or perverted, to rouse the highest faculties; if feeling be not degraded or dead, to excite its strongest and holiest emotions; if we be not the sold slaves of sin, hugging in contented bondage the fetters of evil habit, to melt the heart in penitence, yet wipe away its bitterest tears, to probe and heal the worst gangrene of vice, to quell the most tumultuous passion, and dispel the gloomiest despair, and to kindle in the bosom the sacred flame of devotion and benevolence, there through life to burn and blaze like the eternal fire upon the altar. His words, blessed be Providence, dissolved not in air. They are embalmed in the scriptures—no, not embalmed; men embalm the dead—but his words are yet, as when uttered, "spirit and life"—the spirit of religion's power, and the life of human hope and goodness. But there they are in the gospels, the expression of that word of God, which "is as a fire that burneth, and as a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces;" which is "sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, a discerner of the

thoughts and intents of the heart;" and which, though the grass wither and the flower fade, "liveth and abideth for ever."

The excellence of Christ as a universal instructor appears both in the doctrines on which he dwelt, and in the means he employed to secure their admission into the minds, and their power over the feelings, of his auditors; that is, in the matter and the manner of his discourses. In both he regarded them less as Jews than as men, less as children of Abraham than as children of Adam, less as members of a particular community than as brethren of the great family of humankind. The topics of his preaching were those great truths of universal and everlasting concern which constitute the essence of religion. He inculcated the Unity of God. As Moses proclaimed to Israel, so did Jesus to the world, that the Lord our God is One Lord. He unfolded—oh, none ever so affectingly!—the supremacy, the boundlessness, the benignity, of his providential dominion. How has he blended the profoundest condescension with the loftiest majesty in teaching that even the sparrow's flight or fall is ordered by the Lord of heaven and earth! He declared and made known the Father. What do we not owe to the first and best teacher of the Divine Paternity? He was "the way, the truth, and the life;" the true way of life, the preacher of immortality, and the prophet of his own crucifixion and resurrection for its confirmation. He was the herald of pardon, grace, and restoration. The righteousness of the heart was his requirement, the bliss of heaven his promise, and a just and proportionate retribution his almost ceaseless and impressive theme. On such topics should he dwell who is to be heard by all nations and generations. These are doctrines for the world. Their interest is coextensive with humanity. No lapse of ages can render any one of them obsolete, or place others by their side in equality of importance. They are the unfailing basis of truth, hope, and duty. "Here is firm footing, here is solid rock."

His mode of inculcating them was indefinitely varied. There was sometimes a long connected chain of thought, as we may trace in the Sermon on the Mount; sometimes a brief and condensed assertion which fixed itself in mind and memory, not to be dislodged or disregarded. On some rare occasions he was stern and commanding; more usually

mild and persuasive. Well was he entitled to pronounce the invitation, "Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly of heart." A lucid simplicity never failed him. It was not a hard, dry, unmoving simplicity, but easily combined with the most melting pathos. Sometimes by questions he excited the sluggish mind to exercise, elicited admissions, guided the course of thought, and made truth almost seem self-attained. At others he brought it home by the happiest analogies, and connected the unknown with the known by a fair affinity. Through all diversities there was an earnestness, an obvious, deep, heart-felt interest, a quenchless solicitude, which might have atoned for the absence of all other qualities, and without which the presence in a religious teacher of all other qualities would be in vain.

Is it a defect that his instructions were only spoken?—that Jesus wrote nothing? So, on the theory of even *his* verbal inspiration, it might perhaps be accounted. So it would have been, had his doctrines or precepts been dependent on verbal accuracy of expression for their right apprehension or observance. The laws of Moses were written; they were positive in their nature, and required literal obedience. Those of Christ are general principles of truth and morals, where varieties of phraseology are of little moment; and what we should imbibe is the scope and spirit of the whole. Creed-makers and imposers, and verbal critics, who suspend theological speculations on sentences, words, and almost on letters, should learn from this fact the vanity of their occupation. Christ's teachings are not framed for such use, or rather such abuse. The form in which Providence decreed their transmission to us intimates their congeniality with the employment of higher faculties, as well as with the exercise of more expansive affections.

Let us glance at the different particulars of Christ's teaching—at his expositions. He not infrequently appeared as a commentator on Moses, the Psalms, and the Prophets. In what spirit did he expound them? Obviously a free and independent one; casting off at once, and totally, the trammels of tradition. He took the pure text, unburdened by the load of pharisaical interpretation. He made his appeal at once to the highest authority—the law and the testimony—pushing aside, as he ad-

vanced to it, all the impertinences of gloss, explanation, and supplement. "What is written there? How readest thou?"

His expositions are as the audible thoughts of reason studying revelation. Look at his proof of a future life from the declaration of Jehovah to Moses, that he was the God of Abraham; implying that Abraham's death had not dissolved the relation between him and his Maker. There was the truth before, like a jewel in a mine: but it was the work of his intellect to detect it there, to bring it up thence for human sight and use, and hold on high the resplendent treasure!

He never violated the spirit for the letter of a passage. He caught the former, and showed it disembodied, as it were, of its original peculiarity, and applied it to persons and circumstances then existing. This may be seen in his use of many Mosaic maxims. Did they prohibit vicious deeds? He, by them, condemned vicious thoughts. The soul of the enactment was in his interpretation; not its lifeless carcass, however scrupulously preserved or critically dissected.

Look at his precepts. The authority with which these were announced was not only that of a commissioned prophet, of itself amply justifying the tone of imperative command, but something higher even than that—the authority of undeniable justice and obligation. They are not merely *his precepts,* they are everlasting righteousness. They are like heaven speaking above, or conscience speaking within us. His voice but gave articulate sound to the dictates of experience, of reason, of history, of nature, of God. His consciousness of this imparted to his manner superhuman dignity. To love, obey, and worship the God that made us; to do as we would be done unto; to forgive as we would be forgiven,—are injunctions which carry to the heart their own proofs, their own enforcement. How admirable the terseness of their expression! In his teaching they are never frittered away. As they fall upon the ear, they sink into the mind. They rise in the memory as temptation rises without. How comprehensive are his precepts! They embrace every thing by going at once to dispositions, which are few and uniform, rather than dwelling on actions, which are multifarious and incessantly varied. In their utility,

their benignity, he stands alone. The world should listen to him, the tendency of whose teaching is to bless the world. They are not systematically arranged, nor are the events of human life. In all its wants, its trials, its sorrows, we may find direction there. He has definitions and discussions too. We have a definition of the term "neighbour;" it is the parable of the Good Samaritan. We have a chapter on the conduct of God to the penitent; it is the parable of the Prodigal Son.

Consider his illustrations. Of these some few are strictly local and temporary, ceasing to be illustrations in a distant age and country; but they are comparatively very few. The great mass are founded on what is common and enduring, and throw upon the subject a light that never fades, or surround it with a glowing atmosphere of interest that never waxes cold. Among these we may class those taken from the Mosaic institutions; as he knew the knowledge of them must become the property of the world together with his gospel. When he called his body a temple which they might destroy, but which he in three days would rebuild; when he applied to his ministry the language of emancipation, rejoicing, and restoration, connected with the year of jubilee; when he compared himself to the paschal lamb, or the brazen serpent in the wilderness,—his death, his resurrection, his moral deliverance of mankind, are as beautifully typified to us as they were to his own countrymen.

More completely of this class are his abundant allusions to nature. So long as the lilies of the field shall grow, he has made them preachers of the providence of God. While the vine shall spread its branches, and shoot forth its leaves and tendrils, and support its graceful clusters, will it tell of him and his disciples, their union with and dependence on him, their moral beauty and fertile usefulness. The majestic mountain seems not more moveless than the obstacles which he told his apostles their faith should remove and cast into the sea; and they are whelmed in the tide of forgetfulness. His gospel yet shines in the light of day, or spreads a sheltering and refreshing shade in the stately tree, or sparkles and invigorates in the ever-flowing fountain, or works with imperceptible benignity, like the viewless wind; and the heavens ever reiterate his promise that the righteous "shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father."

When he took illustrations from human stations and occupations, they were chiefly those which the condition of man upon the earth renders of permanent necessity, or at least of permanent existence. In his similes and parables, the sower casts his grain, the fisherman throws his net, the husbandman gathers in the harvest; there is the steward interposing between the lord and his tenants; the rich man in purple feasting, and the beggar at his gate; masters commanding, and servants rendering an account: all the scenery of common life; and by its use endearing to humanity the religious and moral principles of which it is made the vehicle.

There is one thing yet more common, yet more interesting—the human heart. From its natural and unvarying and essential emotions he drew his noblest illustrations. Imitation, gratitude, sympathy, parental love,—these are employed by him again and again. They excite to copy goodness; they justify the fervour of the forgiven sinner to the contemptuous Pharisee; they plead for kindness to the depressed: they shadow out the mercy of infinite love. Man is the monument of his excellence as an instructor; and there is a living and lasting commentary on his doctrine in every human bosom.

The subject might be pursued through his prophecies, so distinct and so blended with benevolent feeling; his controversies—where he was ever just in discriminating the character of his opponents, acute in detecting their sophistry, and unanswerable in his appeals to their own principles; his exhortations—where every word seems to fall like a tear of anguish for the obstinate, and to promise an embrace of welcome to the penitent; his rebukes—which, called down by hypocrisy the vilest and malignity the most infernal, have all the dignity of judicial reprobation;—and we should still conclude, as we began, that "never man spake like this man." All were crowned by his example. This is so perfect, that had we it without the precepts, it would teach them. It enforces all goodness, both separately from them and conjointly. Obedience and imitation unite us with him. "He that gives alms to the poor, takes Jesus by the hand; he that patiently endures injuries and affronts, helps him to bear his cross; he that comforts his brother in affliction, gives an amiable kiss of peace to Jesus; he that

bathes his own and his neighbours' sins in tears of penance and compassion, washes his Master's feet. He that considers with what affections and lancinations of spirit, with what effusions of love, Jesus prayed; what fervours and assiduity, what innocency of wish, what modesty of posture, what subordination to his Father and conformity to the divine pleasure, were in all his devotions, is taught and excited to holy and religious prayer. The rare sweetness of his deportment in all temptations and violences of his passion, his charity to his enemies, his sharp reprehensions to the Scribes and Pharisees, his ingenuity towards all men, are living and effectual sermons to teach us patience and humility, and zeal and candid simplicity, and justice in all our actions. The life of Jesus is not described to be like a picture in a chamber of pleasure—only for beauty and entertainment of the eye—but like the Egyptian hieroglyphics, whose every feature is a precept, and the images converse with men by sense and signification of excellent discourses" (Jeremy Taylor).

Sermon VIII.—Christ's Conversation with Nicodemus.

"There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews: the same came to Jesus by night" (John iii. 1, 2).

And that was better than not coming to him at all; though it was not so honourable as coming in the face of day. The Catholics canonised Nicodemus; and though some better, there are many worse saints in their calendar —many who, instead of coming in the night, *made* the night, and were as gloomy clouds in the sky, shadowing the face of nature, and bringing on the long darkness of error and superstition; many whose only light was the flashing of the flames of persecution which they kindled; many who, instead of being timid friends, were, in reality, deadly enemies, though in profession pillars of the gospel; many who, in the name of the great Teacher of truth, piled up creeds of falsehood, and fenced them with curses; who, in the name of the Saviour of the world, laid the world desolate, and hunted its best inhabitants to destruction; and made the religion of love a pretext for hatred, bigotry, and war. The shades on the character of

Nicodemus are but twilight to their midnight. He was, nevertheless, but of infirm and feeble mind; and there is need of the hypocrisy and vices of less hesitating men to exhibit him to much advantage, unless we look further than to the circumstances here mentioned.

I shall make a remark or two on the outline of his character, as John has shown it; apply it to the illustration of the celebrated conversation recorded in this chapter; and then deduce, for our improvement, some reflections from the language of Christ, so explained.

1st, The character of Nicodemus.

He was a Pharisee; and though this does but little towards apprising us of his individual character, yet it does something. The leading distinctions of the party were the extent of their creed, which embraced all the books of scripture, and ascribed to the prophecies an authority denied by the Sadducees, and coupled with these a mass of traditionary explications; the strictness of their observances, in which they prided themselves on the most minute and perfect performance of the ritual, with a variety of additions; and their love of popularity, which they seemed to have assiduously cultivated, though many of them despised the people whom they courted, and only aimed at being reverenced by them to domineer over them. Such was the party to which Nicodemus belonged; his being a member of which was matter either of education or of choice, and by the general spirit of which we may therefore assume him to have been influenced, or rather tainted.

He was a ruler of the Jews, *i. e.* a member of the Sanhedrim. The seventy members of this court were next in dignity and influence to the high-priest. Their functions seem to have included political as well as ecclesiastical affairs; and though not very accurately defined, were evidently very extensive. In what way they were chosen, or whether even they might not succeed to the office hereditarily, does not appear. Nicodemus had, I infer from an expression in the conversation, advantages of birth which entitled him to such a distinguished station.

He was a timid man. This is sufficiently obvious from the time which he selected for his visit to Christ, and from a circumstance afterwards mentioned. In the seventh chapter we learn that the Sanhedrim had sent officers to

apprehend Christ, who were so impressed by his discourses that they returned to their employers, exclaiming, "Never man spake like this man!" On this, some gave vent to virulent expressions, and Nicodemus felt his courage sufficiently roused by so glaring a violation of justice and decency to remonstrate, saying, "Doth our law judge any man before it hear him, and know what he doeth?" The appeal was fair, modest, and pertinent; but it produced the supercilious and threatening retort, "Art thou also of Galilee? Search and look; for out of Galilee ariseth no prophet." And he quailed, and was silenced. His courage had evaporated in that one flash, and he shrank from the odium of a further contest in behalf of one whom he could not but believe in his conscience to be an innocent man, and a real prophet. Nor does it appear that he at all interposed to stop the atrocious mockery of a trial to which Christ was subjected. It has been supposed, indeed, and it might be the fact, that irregularly and tumultuously as the proceeding was conducted, neither he nor Joseph of Arimathea was present. Both honourably employed themselves in embalming the body of Christ, which was an emphatic expression of their sense of the injustice of the sentence which had been executed. At that time, we imagine, the convictions of Nicodemus had gathered strength, or his feelings were so powerfully excited as to dispel his usual fearfulness.

There are two sorts of timidity which we must distinguish here, the one affecting the operations of the intellect, and the other the outward conduct. A man may have little anxiety as to whether he please or displease his fellow-creatures; he may have no eager thirst for their applause, no paralysing apprehensions of their opprobrium; he may not care about perilling honours or profits by an honest religious profession; he may even defy obloquy and persecution; and yet be as arrant an intellectual coward as ever existed, afraid of venturing in speculation an inch from the beaten track; afraid of examining either the basis or the building of his faith, and of touching either its pillars or its ornaments; afraid of losing sight of his priest, lest he should be mazed in a wilderness of doubt; afraid of a new opinion, a new thought, or a new book, if it wears a questionable shape. In others, the symptoms are directly opposite;

they read, examine, reflect, decide, reject, and adopt, with freedom and courage; but there their freedom and courage end; and when they should proceed to profess, to attack the error they have renounced, to promulgate the truth they have embraced, they become mere slaves and cowards. They are afraid of the frowns of the great; afraid of the prejudices and violence of the multitude; afraid of injuring their worldly circumstances; afraid of losing the friendship of their associates; afraid of forfeiting a station in which they may be very useful; afraid men are not yet prepared to hear the truth; and, more justly than all, afraid that they are not the firm, bold, and zealous persons who can consistently tell it. This is really the worse and baser sort of timidity of the two. It was that of Nicodemus. His convictions—for he was certainly convinced that Jesus was a prophet, and most probably that he was the Messiah—show mental courage. They show his conquest of prejudices, which in his station, even with a good man, might be very strong, and demand a powerful effort. But it all ended in coming to Jesus by night. As this last kind of timidity has a cast of worldly prudence in it, we must, I fear, add that to the notion already formed of Nicodemus, and yet further combine somewhat of a cunning and cautious ambition. He would not risk all with the Sanhedrim and Judaism, but he also wished to have an interest in the kingdom of heaven. He aimed at serving God and Mammon. He desired, in the event of Christ's success, to be one of his teachers, agents, or officers, and yet not, in the mean time, to break his connection with the Pharisees, or to forfeit his high station. He would remain at the top of the wheel, even while it revolved. He would be a secret friend during the season of opposition, suffering, and labour, yet in honour when came the period of success and glory. He would not only not be hostile to either, but be in esteem, friendship, and office with both. A perilous state for integrity, though it may have been ventured upon without the previous forfeiture, as was his case; for his timidity was not yet hypocrisy, nor his unavowed friendship, treachery; though it is difficult to see how both could have long remained without their so degenerating. Every one drawn towards such a vortex should fervently repeat the prayer not to be led into temptation, and take heed not to

stultify his own devotions by plunging into it without being led.

We proceed to consider, 2dly, The conversation between Christ and Nicodemus.

The division of chapters has in this, as in many other cases, broken the train of the writer's thoughts so as very much to mar the beauty of the passage, and the obvious propriety of its introduction. No man who wishes to understand his Bible should heed these artificial breaks of chapter and verse, which are often most destructive to sense. The greater part of this chapter is a commentary, of which the last two verses of the second chapter are the text. It is a particular instance of a general fact there asserted, and probably brought by that assertion to the recollection of the apostle. When Christ wrought miracles at Jerusalem, "many believed;" but their faith, we may infer, was not attended with knowledge, and would either have made them tools of his enemies in the priesthood, and traitors, or have induced them to force temporal authority upon him to advance the sort of kingdom of heaven which they expected. "Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all, and needed not that any should testify of man: for he knew what was in man." He detected men's motives in an extraordinary way, whether by profound observation or by supernatural direction; and this, whether they were disciples or not, concealed friends or open enemies, of high or low station; not merely with the populace, but with others of a different cast; for "There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews: the same came to him by night." Such is the introduction of the conversation. The first address of Nicodemus is respectful and conciliatory; he uses the title of Rabbi, which does not seem to have belonged to Christ legally, but which was often conferred by allowed custom on distinguished teachers: "Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest except God be with him." All that appears here is respect, conviction to some extent, and desire of instruction. How startling, then, is the reply of Christ: "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again" (or born from above), "he cannot see the kingdom of God." This is no reply to the words; nothing can

well be wider. It is a reply to the character, thoughts, intentions, of Nicodemus; an illustration, as the writer has already hinted, of Christ's penetrating the motives of men, and acting and speaking upon his profound knowledge of the human heart. Nicodemus did not wish to be an avowed disciple then, while it was dangerous; but to be a teacher in reversion, when the kingdom of the Messiah should be flourishing. And the reply is, that a man could not see, could not have any connection with, that kingdom, unless he was an avowed proselyte. When a heathen was proselyted to Judaism (by baptism and circumcision), he was said to be born again. The phrase means outwardly and openly proselyted. You wish to be a teacher hereafter; you must first be an avowed disciple. The surprise of Nicodemus was not at the phrase, with the figurative use of which he must have been acquainted, but with its application. Had it been applied to a heathen, he would have had no difficulty; but his pride was puzzled to think how a child of Abraham could need any such further change as could be called a second birth. "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb, and be born?" How can a Jew? that is. He assumes it to be as impossible to find any thing more rich in truth or privilege to which to proselyte a Jew, as to repeat the natural birth of the individual. That he really supposed Christ to speak literally, is so childish, that it is strange so many intelligent commentators should have been satisfied with it. Still referring to his secret intentions, Jesus repeats the necessity of open proselytism, and adds to it the need of a higher qualification than even the learned inquirer possessed, or could possess—that of miraculous endowment. "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born of water"—openly discipled by baptism—"and of the Spirit"—endowed with the gift of miracles—"he cannot enter into the kingdom of God"—be a teacher of the gospel in Messiah's administration. "That which is born of the flesh, is flesh; and that which is born of the spirit, is spirit." Your natural descent from Abraham, great as you may deem the privilege, or that distinguished birth which raises you to the Sanhedrim, cannot bestow the higher power to be conferred on my apostles and messengers, which is miraculous in its

nature and origin. Nicodemus would probably have reckoned that one of his learning and station would be most acceptable to Jesus on any terms, and was astonished at an open proselytism being demanded as an essential preliminary. Christ checks his wonder by declaring that his agents were not selected on the ordinary principles on which the world would calculate, but by superior direction, or from motives which, with his views, he could not apprehend. "Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye"—the greatest of you—"must be born again. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit." The neglect of such men as Christ neglected, and the choice of such as he chose, must have been as mysterious to Nicodemus as the course of the wind, but was, like that, regulated by the wisdom of Providence. Nicodemus said, "How can these things be?" Why are terms so hard necessary, and how can a choice so seemingly unaccountable and unwise introduce the Messiah's kingdom? The answer is not only a rebuke for not better understanding the prophecies, which might have given him clearer notions, but a delicate vindication of the plan which neglected such men as not the best qualified for the proclamation of the gospel. "Art thou a master of Israel"—and wouldst be in the kingdom of God—"and knowest not these things? Verily, verily, I say unto thee, we speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen"—experience has already shown the necessity of looking rather to the poor than to the Rabbis, and of insisting on open discipleship—"and ye receive not our witness. If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe if I tell you of heavenly things?" Earthly and heavenly mean simply, things more obvious to, or remote from, the apprehension of the Jews of that day. The earthly, or comparatively obvious, things which Christ had told, were, the necessity of open proselytism to him, even of the Rabbis, the higher qualification than they possessed of spiritual gifts for his teachers, and the choice of them on other principles than their worldly-mindedness readily apprehended. The heavenly, or more surprising, spiritual, and important things, at which he proceeds to hint, were, the death of the Messiah, to which

either he or the evangelist in a commentary adds the calling of the Gentiles. John introduces here a parenthetical remark: "And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of Man, which is in heaven." No man has ever understood the counsels of God like him, the great revealer of them to man, who is now in glory. Christ continues: "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so"—in suffering, not in temporal honour—"must the Son of Man be lifted up; that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life: for God so loved"—not the Jews merely, but —"the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world"—to punish and subdue the Gentiles —"but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned; but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only-begotten Son of God." The last three verses are perhaps the interposed remark of John, to whom the phrase "only-begotten" seems peculiar. The conversation had probably continued till late in the night, and Christ, alluding to the time, concludes with a solemn warning, to which the feelings of one who had come skulking under its shades must have given an awful impressiveness: "And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be discovered; but he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest that they are wrought in God." The whole passage, even to this last allusion to the unavowed objects of Nicodemus, is thus admirably illustrative of the assertion which introduces it, that Christ "knew what was in man."

3. Having thus explained the dialogue, I would observe how little connected it is with the notion, which has been so often deduced from it, of a miraculous change, essential to salvation, for all to undergo.

Such a change is as remote from the subject, and as impertinent to it, as can well be imagined. The necessity

of open proselytism, and of miraculous powers, for teaching in the Christian kingdom of heaven, are the topic—not the natural depravity of man, and the need of supernatural grace to change his heart. That exposition destroys all the beauty of the allusions and imagery, and the pertinency and wisdom of the replies. It is not even consistent with itself; for the advocate for the necessity of a total change of heart for salvation, will yet scarcely urge a similar necessity of water baptism, and yet here they are placed on precisely the same ground. And they were rightly so placed; for a concealed convert was as disqualified for a teacher as one not born of the Spirit, *i. e.* not gifted with miraculous power; nay, even more so. It is not agreeable to the use of the terms; for being "born again," both in the phraseology of Jewish proselytes and Christian fathers, was proselytism by baptism—not the internal conviction and moral change. And surely those who just preceded or were contemporary, and those who immediately followed, must be better guides to the force of a phrase, than modern theologians, whose system needs a different import. Elsewhere, then, must the proofs of that extraordinary doctrine be sought; but not elsewhere, in scripture, will they be found; for Jesus taught that the doers of his word were blessed, and the apostles preached that "in every nation he that feareth God, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him."

How admirably has the apostle developed the fact which he commenced with stating, of Christ's discernment of men's motives! There are many similar cases; as when he replied to the murmured objection of the Pharisees against his forgiving sins, by healing the cripple; when, by the parable of the Two Debtors, he rebuked Simon's supercilious censure of the woman who anointed his feet, and the doubts entertained of his prophetic character; when he replied to the salutation of Judas, "Betrayest thou the Son of Man with a kiss?" and very many others which might be cited. May we not ask, Whence had this man this knowledge? And if inspiration be not always needful to account for them, still do they not show a character formed by Providence for the great task before him, the working of Him who moulds the heart, and prepares his agents for their allotted station and allotted work; who makes the winds his

messengers, and flames of fire his ministers, and to redeem mankind raises up one fitted to be a Prince and a Saviour?

If all this be a fable, it is indeed "a cunningly devised fable;" for never were marks of truth, before or since, so multiplied in fiction. "The highest heaven of invention" glows with no such colours, nor beams with such unsetting luminaries. Every remark and allusion is fraught with reference to time, place, and person; and the more these narratives are studied, the more are such references brought to light and shown to be in harmony. Falsehood evaporates in the crucible through which they pass undimmed and brightened. Let us believe, let us profess—not Christianity merely, but truth—for the record is a lesson on the importance of sincerity, and a manly frankness, and a becoming disregard of temporal consequences, in matters of religion and conscience. For these, Christ could see no equivalent in the learning or talent or rank and power of the unavowed convert. These could reflect no such lustre on the individual, render no such service to his cause, nor can they ever to the cause of truth and righteousness, as plain honesty of conduct, and acting up to our mental convictions. The Rabbi is rebuked, while the less important Nathanael (less important in a worldly view) is welcomed with the praise, "Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!" It was not by time-serving or concealment—not by worldly prudence, or rabbinical, or royal, or imperial aid—that the gospel made its way; but, under God, and with miraculous attestation, by the sincerity, boldness, open profession, and active exertion of good men. Even the most learned of its advocates saw and gloried in this: "Ye see your calling, brethren: how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called; but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen; yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are; that no flesh should glory in his presence." Such a religion is built on a rock, and in it our hopes may be safely treasured. There we fly and find refuge; for no beating storm or boisterous foe, no thunderbolt of heaven or convulsion of earth, can harm us there. As its origin

was the work of God, so its security, its progress, its future universality, and the final salvation of its sincere believers and consistent professors, have a safe and sacred pledge in the infallible promise of his word, and the benevolent operations of his resistless power.

Sermon IX.—The Lord's Prayer.

"Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we also forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen" (Matt. vi. 9-13).

The Lord's Prayer may be considered as a depository of Christian doctrine, a model of Christian devotion, and a manual of Christian duty.

The Lord's Prayer is valuable and instructive as a depository of Christian doctrine.

Offering a prayer and reciting a creed are doubtless very distinct acts, as to both the faculty employed and the object proposed. While engaged in the former, it is well for us not to advert to the latter, nor allow the spirit of devotion to be embittered, checked, or degraded by the asperities of controversial warfare. The one is an act of the head, the other of the heart. The one relates to the God on whom we are all dependent; the other regards fellow-creatures to whom we are opposed. The one is a statement of our speculations, and the other is an expression of our feelings. As we address not our petitions to feeble man, so we need not repeat the articles of our faith to the Omniscient Deity. Yet it is and must be the fact, that every prayer contains or implies religious principles, of greater or less completeness in proportion to the whole religious faith of the individual, according to the circumstances of its composition. The very act of prayer distinguishes the Theist from the Atheist; the believer in superior direction from him who resolves all into chance. "He who cometh unto God must believe that he is; and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." It is a recognition of the existence of an invisible being or

beings, and of the importance of his or their agency. Of almost any prayer it will be obvious whether it is offered by monotheist or by polytheist. Either the plurality of gods will be directly addressed, or, if but one be invoked, there will be indications of his not being the sole ruler of the universe, but one of an assemblage of local or associated divinities.

The character of the object of worship will appear, if in no other way, yet by the spirit of the prayer, its tone of slavishness, terror, presumptuous boldness, or filial love and reverence. In like manner, many topics of theology on the nature, duties, circumstances, hopes, and fears of man, cannot but make their way into the expression of his wants and wishes, and modify its sentiments and colour its phraseology. The real importance of an article of faith is also often better indicated by a prayer than by a creed. Such formulæ are occasioned by controversy. They detail most amply and affirm most strongly not that which is really most momentous in the system of the compiler, but that which is most opposed or discussed at the time of the compilation. Many churches have published creeds which did not mention a Providence, or the resurrection of the dead. Never were there, I apprehend, prayers of those churches, or of their individual members, in which these topics did not occupy a much larger space than many which engross a large portion of their creeds. These were the real indications of their system, and of the relative importance of its parts. There are two circumstances which make a prayer peculiarly valuable for this purpose: that it be composed for an assembly, rather than for an individual; and for common and continued use, rather than for a particular occasion. Individual feeling, or a peculiar emergency, limits the reference of a prayer, and makes it, as to doctrine, a selection for a particular object; while in providing for its permanent use by many, each religious truth of moment will be found in its natural place, and will rank according to its relative importance as a practical principle. The Lord's Prayer unites these advantages. It was not meant to be used only by one person or on one occasion, but as a stated formulary for the disciples. Moreover, it emanated directly from the Founder of our religion, and comes vested with his decisive authority. There is every motive, then,

to regard it as a depository of doctrines; and when they are ascertained, we are warranted in considering them as the leading doctrines, not of a particular and fallible set of men, but of Christianity itself. It is the composition of Christ; it is the Christian prayer.

It distinctly implies the *Divine Unity*. It uses repeatedly and uniformly the singular pronoun: "thy name," "thy kingdom," "thy will;" and the singular form of the verbs, "give," "forgive," "lead," "deliver," which, though not distinguished in the English language, yet is in the original. It is addressed to one divine person, and only one.

And he is invoked as "*Our Father*." The distribution of Deity into the persons of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost has had this injurious result, among others, that the term Father has sunk into a mere correlative to Son—a technical distinction in the Trinity; and God the Father is often invoked without any thing more being meant than that he is not God the Son, and without any reference to the benignity of his character, or to his sustaining that lovely relation to all, or even to any, of his rational creatures. The original expression of that glorious doctrine of Christianity is thus transmuted into the base metal of a mere technical phrase, or metaphorical distinction, in scholastic theology. It is time for this unhallowed association to be broken, and for the word Father to bring with it, whenever used in relation to God, all that richness of admiring and grateful feeling which should ever spring at the mention of a love of which all that the best and tenderest parent ever experienced is but the weak emblem and faint shadow, the finite and earthly picturing out the heavenly and unbounded. That application could not be our Lord's; for by saying "Our Father," the relation at least includes all who, in any age or country, becoming his disciples, should also adopt the use of this his enjoined mode of preferring their adorations.

The least, then, that we can infer is, that the Divine paternity embraces all Christians. But this fact implies the universality of that paternity. Christianity is a system of mercy, enjoyment, and hope, freely offered to all. It is a gospel to be preached "to every creature." Whoever receives it learns that God is, in the highest and tenderest sense, his Father; and that he will be the immortal re-

cipient of whatever infinite grace can give. This is offered to all; therefore it must exist for all. Divine bounty must have spread that feast, to which divine veracity invites the world. If it be said that the offer is conditional, the privilege contingent on our reception of the gospel, I reply, that our knowledge and enjoyment are so contingent, and must be. We must possess faith in the record, to have the hope of the inheritance. We must learn and believe that God is our Father, to delight in the character of his children. Our present felicity is contingent, but not his love, for that love is omnipotent. He who invites all to believe that he is the Father, must be the Father of all. That fact cannot be contingent on their believing it, cannot be falsified by their rejection. Nor can it ultimately, when his plans are perfected, be rejected by any. Let his glory be fully revealed, and all flesh shall see it together.

To this great doctrine of the prayer, that the human race has an Almighty Father, it adds that of *salvation by his free grace, and by that alone.* It prays for the forgiveness of sins in the manner and on the condition of our forgiving others. Now, the devout man never prays for that which he knows it is inconsistent with the Divine perfections to grant, or even for that which, though he cannot see its incompatibility with these perfections, he yet finds, from the course of Providence or the teaching of revelation, is inconsistent with the Divine plan. He does not pray to be endowed with miraculous power, or to be made immortal without dying. If such be the tenor of the law of God, and such the nature of his justice, that he cannot, without violating the one and dishonouring the other, remit the penalty of transgression to the sinner unless some sufficient substitute bear that penalty in his stead, then will no good man either himself pray, or teach others to pray, for pardon, without reference to that substitution. It becomes the only ground of encouragement for such a prayer, without which it were as improper as to pray for miraculous power or immortality here. The very word *forgive* is decisive. The debt which is paid by a surety is not forgiven. The debtor is obliged to the surety, but not to the creditor. He has his payment, and can have nothing more. The debtor asks him nothing, owes him nothing. The prayer implies that God has mercy, and is free, and may

be implored to bestow it, without regard to any other person, human or divine, or any other transaction than its gracious exercise. Moreover, we pray to be forgiven as we forgive. Here is a condition; here is the mode specified. But till any one is prepared to say that every man who uses this prayer is bound never to cancel a debt till a third party has paid the amount on the debtor's behalf, never to overlook an offence till a third party has endured the punishment on the offender's behalf, he cannot fairly assert its consistency with any doctrine of forgiveness, except that which ascribes it to the unpurchased grace of God. And if any will go that length, he will only involve his faith in inconsistency with the spirit of the gospel, with every tolerable system of legislation, with every just code of morals, and with the common dictates of humanity. Is there, can there be, a doubt how Christ taught men to forgive? Is it not freely? So, then, he here declares, and instructs his disciples solemnly to declare in the Divine presence, does God forgive.

The prayer implies *the universal providence of God.*

It ascribes to him those extraordinary operations which we call miracles, praying for that kingdom which, in the primary use of the phrase, designated the supernatural powers showered down on the first followers of Christ, and by which the gospel was established. They were splendid demonstrations of Omnipotence; and though to the philosopher a more astonishing power may be traceable in the laws of nature, of which they were seeming violations, yet it may be doubted whether the philosopher himself—certainly not the bulk of mankind—would ever have had such elevated notions of that power but for these its extraordinary exhibitions.

It ascribes to him the command of men's hearts, imploring him to mould the world to goodness, to make his creatures the willing observers of his righteous will. He who offers it professes the sublime faith, that depravity cannot and shall not resist the agency of Almighty love; that vice has no inherent power by which it can to eternity defy mercy or retribution to subdue its votaries. It supposes him able and willing to bring men to repentance. It asserts him to be supreme, not only over matter, but in the nobler empire of mind and morals. It indicates the ex-

tension of his superintendence to seemingly minute objects. We pray to him for daily bread: we receive it but from his providence.

In the Christian notion of God's government, it is not restricted to great events or surprising deliverances, or carried on by repeated interpositions. There is nothing above, below, beyond it. The doxology is an interpolation, and was, perhaps, not spoken by Christ. But, as a customary mode of concluding prayer, he probably intended its addition as a matter of course, and thus it became always associated with the prayer. The kingdom, power, and glory are God's. Preëminently do we feel that they are so, when we trace him in all; when we imagine no divided empire, either by divine persons enthroned as coadjutors, or infernal enemies contending for and securing a portion; no past subversion of his designs by the demon of some theologians, who

> "In one hour
> Spoiled six days' labour of a God;"

no future throne raised on the vice and misery of millions, to exist to the same eternity as his own. If the providence of God includes all things, then all are subservient to one plan and object; and if he be our Father, that must be a benevolent object. Both these the prayer teaches, and so leads our hopes and faith on to the final prevalence of goodness and happiness, to the ultimate universality of righteous felicity.

These, then, are the doctrines of this prayer; not, perhaps, all the theological truth which it contains or implies, but its leading propositions, its pervading principles.

Those who talk of the imperfection of a faith so simple would do well to consider this fact. We may stop short of them; but we only stop in our belief where Christ stopped in his prayer. They say that these opinions have nothing of the gospel in them; but he deemed them gospel enough for his disciples to go with into the presence of their God. He selected them as the faith, of which, in the solemn act of worship, the Christian should make a virtual profession. He deemed them sufficient for the purposes of devotion; and if so, they are sufficient also to produce holiness and conduct to salvation. Even if more be true, more cannot

be essential. His words are a broad shield, from which the calumny that would disgrace, and the anathema that would terrify, alike fall innoxious. And it becomes men to be careful how they brand as erroneous, or imperfect, or incapable of generating pure piety, or wanting something needful to pardon and salvation, the principles which he thought ample enough on which to construct a model of devotion for his followers. It becomes them still more to be careful how they venture to add to his work, to pray to persons whom he did not teach us to invoke, to interpolate conditions of mercy of which he made no mention, and by their supplemental doctrines advance an implicit charge of imperfection against his recorded directory of worship. It becomes them, most of all, to be careful how they presume to incorporate, either with public or private prayer, doctrines not merely additional, but inconsistent with those which form the basis of this manual. It is not when the disciple kneels, in the name of Christ, to the God of Christ, that he should breathe the language of doctrines in direct hostility to that oneness of the Object of prayer, that paternity of the Divine character, and that spontaneous freeness of Divine mercy, which are here consecrated to our faith and love. Men should pause and inquire and examine, thoroughly and fairly and patiently examine, before they rush onward in such a career as this. To do so is a duty to their fellow-Christians, to themselves, to their Saviour, to their God.

Let us prize, both for its simplicity and its perfection, a faith which the Saviour has thus solemnly sanctioned as to its truth, and thus beautifully exhibited as to its devotional power. And, oh, that it may often lead us, in filial affection to God and earnest good will to man, to the footstool of mercy; and work by love in our hearts and lives, adorning our characters with all Christian graces; and thus finally secure our portion, in the resurrection of the just, to the joys of immortal blessedness!

Dr. Paley has described the excellence of this prayer, and, in connection with the parables of Christ, its importance as part of the internal evidence of the divinity of our religion and the mission of its Founder, with his usual force and simplicity of language and condensation of thought: "The Lord's Prayer, for a succession of solemn thoughts,

for fixing the attention upon a few great points, for suitableness to every condition, for sufficiency, for conciseness without obscurity, for the weight and real importance of its petitions, is without an equal or a rival. From whence did these come? Whence had this man his wisdom? Was our Saviour, in fact, a well-instructed philosopher, while he is represented to us as an illiterate peasant?—or shall we say that some early Christians of taste and education composed these pieces, and ascribed them to Christ? Besides all other incredibilities in this account, I answer with Dr. Jortin, 'that they could not do it.' No specimens of composition which the Christians of the first century have left us, authorise us to believe that they were equal to the task. And how little qualified the Jews, the countrymen and companions of Christ, were to assist him in the undertaking, may be judged of from the traditions and writings of theirs which were the nearest to that age. The whole collection of the Talmud is one continued proof into what follies they fell whenever they left their Bible, and how little capable they were of furnishing out such lessons as Christ delivered."

There is something in this mode of defending Christianity which is both affecting and convincing. It displays the excellence, while it demonstrates the truth, of our religion, and makes that truth dependent on the excellence. It proves the gospel divine in its origin, because it is divine in its nature, in its instructions and communications, its spirit and tendency. Christianity is thus shown to be the work of God, from the inability of man for its production. A God is shown in revelation, as we show him in nature, by challenging the opponent to direct us to any other adequate cause for such effects; to show the hand that kindled the sun and scattered the stars, that moulded their forms, and impelled their motions, and preserves their harmony. Nor, till this is done, need we fear that in any thing merely earthly,—in human wisdom and contrivance, in the plans of legislators, the researches of sages, the craft of priests, or the reveries of enthusiasts,—in any thing short of divine inspiration, can be indicated the sources of that celestial piety, that dignified yet benignant morality, that pure and boundless benevolence, which we find and love in the New Testament.

Sermon X.—The same Subject continued.

"Our Father which art in heaven," &c. (Matt. vi. 9-13).

The Lord's Prayer is *a model of Christian devotion.* That it may be so regarded cannot need proof. Our Lord, giving his disciples, at their request, a form of prayer which they were to use in that capacity, must be presumed, by all who acknowledge his authority, to have framed one which not only was complete for that end, but which also would present, in its leading features, the characteristics of Christian devotion. It was, assuredly, not meant to be the only prayer they should employ; but I think he must have intended that, generally, when they worshiped, their petitions should be imitated from the model, formed on the principles, and imbued with the spirit, of this admirable composition.

Its perfection, as a model of Christian devotion, consists in its implying and tending to excite those emotions towards Deity which are characteristic of real piety. We gather from it how the mind of the Christian should be affected in relation to his God. He calls him Father, and approaches him with filial regard. His is not the spirit of bondage, by which terrific superstitions degrade the creature into the Creator's slave. As in his faith love is the essence of divine glory, so in his prayers is it of devout feeling. There are certain attributes which cannot be forgotten in prayer: that God is powerful, so as to be resistless; wise, in knowledge so capacious as to be unfathomable; our sovereign, in dominion so absolute, that no laws or sanctions can raise themselves in competition or defiance of his, as to strength of obligation or depth of interest. These the Christian remembers, but under a peculiar aspect. That power is to him the power of a Father; that wisdom, the wisdom of a Father; that supremacy, the supremacy of a Father. The term includes all these; but they do not include paternity. The tyrants of the earth can tell, and their oppressed victims, too, can tell, that power and intellect and dominion can blend, where no benignity mingles to bless their union. The gods of heathenism tell, and their benighted and depraved votaries respond, of supposed superhuman nature, power, knowledge, and influence, with-

out those qualities which indicate goodness and produce affection. Even nominally Christian creeds, and Christian worshipers, have exhibited a vindictive Creator and despairing creatures. In our adoration, all perfect qualities of mind and might and sovereignty revolve around the name of Father, receiving from it that light and glory without which they were dark orbs of desolation. Filial love is the first characteristic of Christian piety. But it is directed to an infinite and eternal Being; it is felt and expressed with becoming reverence: it hallows his name. The grossness of profanity, the heedlessness of levity, and the strange familiarity of language in which some enthusiasts have disgustingly indulged, cannot claim with it the remotest affinity. The Christian who enters into the spirit of this prayer, turns from them instinctively. His love of God can never be dissociated from holy reverence. Experiencing the delightful and improving influences of piety, he longs to feel them more, and to have them felt universally. He would do God's will perfectly, and establish his kingdom supremely, in himself, and in all mankind. To be better, and see or make others better, is his daily fervent wish and effort. He is not the proud assertor of peculiar privileges, or arrogant claimant of superior sanctity. His devotion is at once uniting and diffusive. He bears his brother man upon his heart when he bows before his Father God. He would have every rational fellow-creature become a righteous fellow-Christian. Such hopes are breathed by him in the full conviction of the complete dependence of all things on God, on that God whose gracious providence he acknowledges even in what seems most his own work, in the supply of his common necessities, the gift of his daily bread. He has the humility engendered by a deep sense of our nothingness and his all-sufficiency. Nor does he rest here; for the humility of the creature sinks yet lower into that of the sinner. In the light of divine holiness, he has a painful feeling of his own transgressions. The natural effect of gradually enlarging views of the character of God is to make man more sensible of the moral imperfections of his own. This is finely expressed by Job, towards the conclusion of the beautiful poem which bears his name: "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth

thee; wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." The earnestness which is excited when the mind is more particularly dwelling on the aberrations of which it is conscious, is well portrayed in the simple language—beautiful because, expressing such a sentiment, it is simple—of an old stanza:

"Mercy, good Lord! mercy I ask;
This is the total sum:
For mercy, Lord, is all my suit;
Oh, let thy mercy come!"

How purifying are such feelings! How strong the disgust they produce even with those passions which man has longest cherished, those habits to which he has longest been enslaved! How complete at least the momentary revulsion to a right mind! How firm the determination to cast aside these weights which impede his progress in the Christian race, and may even make him stumble to destruction! And what feelings towards man must necessarily mingle with these feelings towards God! How unreasonable, how black, do ambition, vanity, rapacity, pride, or revenge then appear! How ill do they assort with the sensations which are uppermost in the soul! How enormously incongruous with the character of an humble, penitent, mercy-seeking transgressor! How proper a moment to abjure and renounce them! How appropriate the occasion for the union of piety and benevolence! When Christ taught men to pray for forgiveness as they forgive, he probably did more than ever has been done, or can again be done, by words merely, for the promotion of benevolence. The man who can be induced sincerely to offer this prayer is purified by it. It works by love instantaneously. It is full of power. He sees the glory of God; and in that instant grows like God. But with this conscious elevation mingles no unhallowed confidence. It is corrected and modified by a wholesome consciousness of weakness and instability. He prays against temptation, content rather to be secure by shunning an unnecessary conflict than to seek the glory of conquest at the risk of a wanton hazard. I cannot but imagine that Christ contemplated the close of this range of pious feeling by the addition of that undoubtedly ancient doxology which is appended, and which so well concen-

trates, condenses, and crowns the whole: "Thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory." Thou rulest over all. The laws of matter and of mind are but the decrees of thy wisdom, the operations of thy power. The denizens of celestial regions own thy sway, together with us, inhabitants of this world, and children of the dust. Thine is a paternal sceptre; thy throne is a throne of righteousness, and justice and mercy are its eternal pillars. "Thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory." Thou art the omnipotent God. None can stay thy hand, or say unto thee, "What doest thou?" The wicked may strive in opposition to thy will, but thou scatterest them as chaff before the whirlwind. Thou givest life; and thou commandest, and we return to dust. All the power of creatures is derived from thee, and only exercised while thou permittest. Thou canst with a word create worlds, or destroy them. "Thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory." Thine be all praise and honour that heart can conceive or tongue express. The blasphemies of the impious detract not from thee. Thee, all the good celebrate with delight. Thee, the repentant sinner blesses, as he seeks the paths of purity, so long abandoned, and hears thy gracious promise of forgiveness. Thee, exalted spirits bless, and with their song shall mingle that of millions of thy redeemed, when thou shalt call them from their graves to immortality and joy. Thy love shall finally glow in every heart, and thy praise resound from every tongue. "Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory for ever." The scenes of life may change, one generation rise as another passes away, empire move its throne from clime to clime, stars be blotted from the sky, and the place of worlds know them no longer; but in every state will we sing thy praise. It shall resound while a conscious being exists. Still it will be infinitely below thine excellence:

> "For, oh, Eternity's too short
> To utter all thy praise."

We cannot avoid observing how completely free this prayer is from sectarian feeling as well as from sectarian doctrines. It does not express what some call experience. It does not detail that progress of emotion which commences with the terrors of the law, and finds relief in the mysteries of satisfaction, and terminates in the exultation

of a share in electing love. It describes not the change which some call the work of the Spirit on the soul, and deem essential to salvation. The prayer shows a simpler faith, capable of all that Christ thought needful to devotion; for it is the source of all that he has here embodied. We rest on his decision that it is sufficient and all-sufficient. May we be convinced of this, not only by argument, but by experience! The cultivation of a devotional spirit is of high importance. It is essential to our advance in moral worth, to consolation in sorrow, to real happiness, to the Christian character in its beauty and its privileges.

Let us often, then, dwell on the principles whose evidence we have examined, and whose abuses we have lopped off, to cherish the sentiments which they were revealed to inspire. Let us range through nature, let us trace the ways of Providence, let us study our own constitution, let us meditate on the records of revelation, let us recall the events of our own lives,—that we may see God in all, and find materials for ever-increasing admiration and gratitude. With the devout man thus engaged, the lustre of the Divine character is ever brightening on the mind, and love to God is ever expanding in the heart. The recollection of Him harmoniously blends with all we behold, or enjoy, or suffer even—for in that he is gracious—or hope for; and leads to that identity of will with Him which is the highest attainment and happiest state of created being. Oh, what can move and animate the soul, if not the idea of God, as delineated by Christ and his apostles—that God who is the Father, who is love? Why have our hearts such capacity of feeling, if not to receive the impression of his goodness? How full of all that can attract and fix the affections is his paternal character!—what boundless excellence! what long-suffering patience! what unspeakable condescension! what infinite, eternal, and almighty benevolence! Nor let it be imagined that the spirit of devotion, sustained and expressed by acts of worship, and by none more than the serious use of the Lord's Prayer, will evaporate in mere feeling. It will preserve the mind from that trifling which debases a rational creature, purify it from unhallowed passions, soothe under unmerited suffering, and calm even the terrors of guilt; aid the progress of virtue, surround its possessor with something of the Divine glory, and in a future state the

righteous will find it one great source of their unspeakable joy, as, with exalted beings, they surround the throne of God in blissful adoration.

The Lord's Prayer is a manual of Christian duty.

I presume it to be so on this principle—prayer is the devout expression of our wishes, and he who is sincere and earnest in his professed wish for any object with which his own exertions may be connected, will not fail to put forth those exertions. Some topics of devotion are comparatively out of the sphere of human efforts. In the faith of the Divine promise, we pray for our own resurrection from the dead, towards which no human efforts can avail. The earnestness of the desire, and the confidence of the prayer, here imply nothing as to exertion. Several similar exceptions might be noted; but when they occur, they are sufficiently obvious. We have more generally to do with what Providence has connected with human exertions, though in those exertions we should never forget our dependence on that Providence for any degree of the desired result.

Every prayer implies, as to these points, an exhortation on his part who framed it, and a pledge of active observance on their parts by whom it is repeated. Every clause of this prayer is an admonition of duty from Christ to his disciples. They who strive not after that for which they pray are self-convicted of insincerity. He tells you by this form: Reverence the Divine name; use it not in your wrath, nor in your sport, nor on any occasion but with solemnity; be anxious for the establishment of that heavenly kingdom, of which man's heart is the throne and man's life the dominion; engage zealously in its promotion; challenge men's attention to sacred truth, and hold it up in bright contrast with the gloom of their scepticism and the absurdity of their inventions; be fearless in your profession, persevering in your exertions, and hearty in your co-operation with those who are like-minded; be yours the religion, not merely of speculation or profession, but of the whole life; while by spreading truth you endeavour to make others do the will of God, do it yourself; apply it to every pursuit and action as a test, inconsistency with which is fatal; be unsparing and prompt in the renunciation of whatever is forbidden; deep be your repentance, complete your reformation; cherish benevolence to all: to the good—

they deserve it; to others—they are your brethren; you are sinful, too, and need the forgiveness you extend; beware of unnecessary trials of your good habits and principles; be steady in temptation whenever duty leads you through it, but shun it whenever you honourably can; live to the Divine glory, not by ascetic privations or vain forms, but by lives of unsullied purity and active usefulness. Such is the morality of this prayer, which I deem the substance of Christian morality, and constituting in its practical development as high a degree of virtuous excellence as humanity can here attain.

A character thus formed contains the pledge of happiness, the earnest of heaven; and it is the passport to the Christian heaven. Christianity leads to glory only by goodness, and assures of there being no failure in that career. He who is imbued with the moral spirit of this prayer needs fear no fanatic denunciation. He does the will of Christ, nor shall he be disowned by him at the dread hour of judgment. His heaven commences in an approving mind and conscious usefulness. His feelings not merely tend to happiness—they are happiness. Sweet are the sensations of their exercise, and bright the hopes which they ever invigorate. The eternal principle of felicity is already planted and growing and germinating in his bosom, and putting forth the flowers that harbinger the fruits of immortality. Christ has saved him, for Christianity has made him good, and in so doing has made him happy, in the way, though not to the degree, in which it will bless him to endless ages.

Sermon XI.—Christ's Doctrine of Providence.

"Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? And one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father" (Matt. x. 29).

The discourse from which these words are taken was addressed by our Lord peculiarly to the apostles. He was sending them forth on their first mission, and he gave them particular directions for their conduct, and assurances of the peculiar care and protection of heaven. This and similar discourses must always be interpreted with reference to the circumstances of their delivery. The precepts and promises

therein contained are precepts and promises given to the apostles exclusively. Before we can avail ourselves of them for common use, it is needful to show, from the reason of the case, or from other passages of scripture, that they are of universal force and application. It cannot follow from any particular action being made the duty of an apostle sent forth on a special mission, and vested with extraordinary powers, that similar conduct is the duty of a Christian sent forth on no such mission, vested with no such powers, but placed in the ordinary circumstances of human life. It cannot follow, from certain security or privilege being assured to them when so engaged, that such security or privilege is certified to every believer in the common course of Providence. But while we should beware, on the one hand, of unwarrantably extending what is thus limited, we should also beware, on the other, of unwarrantably limiting what is in itself universal. If a precept be but the occasional enforcement of some moral duty, then its having been enjoined on the apostles is an example and warrant for our enjoining it on you also. If a promise be but the exposition of some established law of the moral government of God, by which appropriate reward attends on obedience, then Christ's reminding his apostles of it—however special the occasion—is authority for its introduction whenever circumstances require it for consolation and encouragement. These, therefore, we may boldly select from out of the midst of particular instructions, to employ them for our own support and guidance, and that of all Christians. And there is another class of assertions with which the propriety of our doing this is even yet more evident. I mean the declaration of general principles, which are asserted in reference to a particular case, but in their general form, and which thus acquire the sanction of a divinely commissioned teacher in their widest acceptation. The text is of this description. The use made of it by Christ might be local, temporary, and peculiar; but the fact it affirms is permanent and universal. His inference on that occasion might be limited, but that does not limit the principle from which it was deduced. If that was applicable to them, it is applicable to us. It is good for nothing, or it is good for all the occasions and all the purposes, extraordinary or ordinary, to which it can be reasonably applied. Having the Saviour's

authority for the fact, we have his authority also for all its legitimate consequences. It is his emphatic assertion of the universal providence of God.

There is little difficulty about the general admission of the doctrine of a providence. To the serious and reflecting mind it can scarcely be the subject of a doubt. That creation is governed, and governed for good, is the evident or audible declaration of the heavens and the earth, of revolving seasons, of the course of human affairs, of much of individual experience, and of the voice of revelation, speaking by prophets, apostles, and Christ himself, the great teacher of mankind, as well as by the facts of sacred history. But various difficulties do arise—and it is to be expected, from the feebleness of our faculties, the limits of our observation, and the effect of painful or agitated feelings upon our judgment, that they should arise—in the practical, consistent, and complete recognition of this providence or government in the particular concerns of individuals. Some things seem too *minute* not to be beneath its care. There is something magnificent in the notion of supreme dominion,—a throne established in the heavens, and ruling over all the earth; and we are startled at the seeming incongruity of associating it with winging the sparrow for its little flight, and numbering the hairs of man's head. Yet it is so associated in the text; nor is it a mere figure of speech. Our follies of distinction might have preferred the soaring eagle for an illustration; but wherever there is sentient existence, in the most unregarded bird that flies, in the meanest worm that crawls, its measure of enjoyment is not less likely to be apportioned by Omniscient Benignity. The condescension of Infinity is the same to either. The same remark applies to the beings we deem unimportant and the events we deem unimportant. The dignity of a sovereign may be thought impaired by his particular attention to the comforts of a child or a beggar; and there may be a yet more substantial incongruity; for the limitation of human faculties and human life may disqualify a man for superintending at once the common concerns of millions and the particular affairs of individuals; but the dignity of Deity, if it were inconsistent with the superintendence of the veriest trifle upon earth, would be inconsistent also with the care of the

world itself, or with that of myriads of such worlds, which are less to Infinity than so many grains of sand on the sea-shore to us. Let me but believe that God cares for the solar system, and the real difficulty of minuteness and trifling is got over, and I have no difficulty as to his caring for any thing that regards man; ay, or bird, beast, or reptile. The one is boundless love and condescension, the other is no more. Again, some things look so like *chance*, that we have difficulty in connecting them with the notion of Providence. We think the sparrow not formed by chance: we argue a Creator there; but by chance we think it may fly hither or thither. In human life, many occurrences have a very fortuitous appearance. We cannot trace either their causes or their consequences. They are as the tree which, we say, happened to fall in one direction and not in another; they are as the wind which, we also say, happened to blow from one point of the compass yesterday, and from another to-day. And so, we say, one thing or another happens to man; and he happens to go here or there, to do this or that. Our language is framed on the supposition of a mingling of accident with order, of chance with design. It is framed on a false supposition. We are often aware of this on reflection, and yet we are so familiarised with such language, that we perhaps unconsciously delude our own minds by its use, and keep up a notion of the incompatibility of a Providence with the particular events so described. The falsehood of such language in what is merely physical has long been demonstrated, and is generally admitted. The language is only kept up because it had become the popular mode of speaking, to deviate from which, as every body knew what it meant, might appear pedantic. Every one knows that the direction in which the tree, it is said, chanced to fall, was determined by those unvarying laws of matter and of motion which were ordained at creation, and which, so far as we can ascertain, are coextensive with creation. The course of the wind, too, arbitrary and capricious as it may seem to us, is undoubtedly the certain result of established laws. In all its variations, and in all our ignorance of whence it cometh and whither it goeth, there is yet nothing that approaches in the remotest degree to chance, properly so called. And thus it is through all the regions of mate-

rial and unconscious being. The most obviously regular and the most seemingly irregular movements in nature are alike devoid of chance and determined by unvarying laws or principles. The sun rises every morning; the periods of his disappearing and reappearing are ascertained by even infantile observation. The regularity forces itself irresistibly upon us. We are compelled to associate with it the notions of order, law, design, natural Providence. We never speak of its happening or chancing to rise or set. But when once science had indicated the immediate cause of this phenomenon, rapid and resistless was its progress towards showing the universal operation of that or similar causes, and resolving into them all that seems most irregular and fortuitous—the occasional storm, the volcanic eruption, the passing meteor, the flitting breeze. Even where we cannot trace these causes, the induction which demonstrates their existence is so large that there is no room left for hesitation. We know that our language—if we use language implying chance—is only the perpetuated phraseology of ignorance or error; and if our feeling for the moment correspond with it, it is soon corrected by the exercise of the judgment. In animated being, and pre-eminently in man, other principles are introduced. There are consciousness and mind and will. Do these added principles involve the addition of chance also? By no means. They suppose the existence of other laws besides those already adverted to; of laws adapted to intelligent nature, as those are adapted to inanimate nature; but they are perfectly consistent with an equal degree of law, order, regularity, connection of cause and effect. The operation of intelligence is no more an accident than the rising of the sun. Man's will is determined by motives; and these motives are all resolvable into his bodily and mental constitution, and the circumstances which surround and have surrounded him of events, companions, books, natural objects, &c.; and these again are resolvable, ultimately at least, into the decree of the great Creator and Legislator of the universe. Man's preference as certainly fixes on that which at the moment he deems the greatest good, as the stone falls to the earth, or the tides obey the moon. There is no more room for chance in human life than in unconscious existence, in the moral than in the material

world, in what man does than in what nature does. The existence and certainty of these laws of mind are matter of fact and of common observation. It is known and acted upon by thousands, who yet, perhaps, never laid it down as a general proposition, who may be startled at such a proposition, and have not been accustomed to look beyond the particular cases in which they were unconsciously applying it. How often may the acute observer of character predict with accuracy what certain individuals will do in certain circumstances! Such a one, he may say, manifests towards me a kind and generous feeling; he professes an attachment which I believe to be sincere; he holds principles which are sound, just, and honourable; he is often in my society, and loud in my praises: but he is impatient of personal inconvenience; he shrinks from the companionship of poverty; he is awed by ridicule; he crouches before the slights of the wealthy or fashionable; and if, as may befall in the most laudable pursuit, and without either crime or folly, fortune should forsake me, and the voice of triumphant enmity thunder forth its calumny, he would not be found at my side, nor his hand be extended for my aid, nor his voice raised in my vindication. And if the character be justly estimated, who doubts, who can doubt, that such would be the fact? But all such predictions go on the supposition of mental laws as fixed as those of matter; like them, capable of being ascertained and applied; and, like them, obvious in some cases, while in others we are baffled, and the semblance of chance is produced by our want of acquaintance with all the facts and circumstances of the case. Now, if there be no chance in all the combinations of unconscious matter, nor in all that conscious beings think and do, the only rational alternative seems to be, that we resolve all into Providence. What else should it be, or can it be? That which is not of accident is of design, is of law, is of God; even to the fall of a sparrow. There is no intermediate principle; the exclusion of chance is the establishment of Universal Providence.

Some, indeed, have thought an intermediate principle discovered, and, without the admission of chance, an exception found to the universal dominion of God, in the *free agency* of man. He is responsible, they say, and to be responsible he must be free. And so he is, if freedom

means the absence of constraint.—He is a voluntary agent; he has the knowledge of right and wrong; that is all that is needful to make him accountable, the subject of praise and blame, of reward and punishment. If more be meant—freedom to act without motive or against motive—the supposition is absurd and self-destructive. A being so constituted would not be affected by reward or punishment; would not be induced by the former to advance in a righteous course, nor by the latter to abandon a vicious course. He would not be a moral agent. Whatever, then, we endure or enjoy from physical influences or from the conduct of human beings, is given or inflicted by Providence. It is the same to us as if it were an immediate act of Deity. However fortuitous it seems, we should ascribe it to him, and acknowledge it as his dispensation.

There is yet another pause, however, which the mind is apt to make before it comes to this acknowledgment. Some occurrences are deemed the *undesigned and uncontemplated results* of general laws. It is believed that God rules the world, and that he does it by certain general principles or laws, which he framed for the purpose of producing certain general results; but it is supposed that in the operations which bring these about, there are other effects which were no part of his objects or plan. Now this is supposing a difficulty to be experienced by the Divine mind, merely because an analogous difficulty would be felt by the human intellect. In many machines, some unforeseen effects have been produced by their working—sometimes advantageous, sometimes pernicious—which were never contemplated by the inventors, and are altogether distinct from the particular object for which the machine was constructed: some quality of the material, or some circumstance in the locality, was unknown to them, or unheeded by them. The infinity of Divine knowledge, the very fact that God is the Creator, that all qualities of bodies are given by him, that all circumstances are ordered by him, precludes the possibility of any thing having been unforeseen or unpurposed by him. Besides, what are laws of nature? They are modes of operation, not an operating power. Cause and effect are terms which merely indicate the connection of events, and not an inherent power in the one for the production of the other. They are the ways in which Divine agency usually

operates, as miracles are the way in which Divine agency has operated on some extraordinary occasions. The return of the earth and the stars to a certain relative position at spring-time is no more the efficient cause of spring, with all its cheering sights and sounds, its bursting leaves and budding flowers, its softening gales and lengthening days and brightening suns, than the uplifting of the rod of Moses was the efficient cause of the waters of the Red Sea rolling back, and piling their billowy walls on either hand to fence the march of the Israelitish host, and closing terrifically over the pursuer's bands, sweeping the might of Egypt along like a company of helpless infants, or like straws on the surface, in their resistless course. The one is, as the other was, the work of God. The sole difference is, that he repeats the one exercise of his power with every returning year, and that the other he has not repeated. There is no reason, but his wise and beneficent will, why nature should not be miracle, and miracle nature; why the uplifting of a rod should not always be followed by the dividing of the waters of sea or river, which we should then term its cause, and the connection a law of nature; nor why the phenomena of spring should not have been a single event, at the command of an inspired prophet, —in which case there would have been sceptical philosophers who would have ridiculed the idea of believing that flowers were ever mere buds; that grass, instead of eternally existing on the surface of the ground, ever sprang up from beneath; or that the air ever changed its temperature. A Divine work is not the less so for its repetition. There is no magic in the phrase, "law of nature," to banish the power which usually, but not in all cases, works according to what we call those laws. The universe exists in God; and every change in its state, from the extinction of a system of worlds to the falling of a feather from a sparrow's wing, is his act. He does all that is done.

Nothing, therefore, is undesigned. We might suppose there was, if we rested in the statement that God has imposed general laws on matter and mind; but that is an imperfect statement. All that we ascribe to them is done by him. His own operations cannot be uncontemplated or undesigned. We should be startled at such a notion as that of an undesigned miracle. It would not, in reality,

be more absurd than an undesigned natural event. Uniform acts and their consequences have, at least, as much the character of design and purpose as unfrequent and unrepeated ones. They are not less reasonably believed to have the same object, and that worthy of God,—though we may be utterly unable to say what it is, or to perceive how it is accomplished.

I must pause here, with intention of resuming the argument, to show that Providence is strictly universal, and that its aim is, not only the good of the whole, but, as essential to that—in its highest sense—the particular good of every individual. Meantime, let us remember the fact already established, the literal interpretation of the text, that "not a sparrow falleth on the ground without our Father;" leading us to the principle, that "of him, and through him, and to him, are all things."

This, indeed, is of itself a momentous truth. It is one which should impress us with seriousness, teach us to look well to our ways, and inspire us with reverential devotion. The Infinite Spirit is within us and around us: we cannot fly his presence nor escape his sight. He pervades all space, exists in all existence, acts in all motion:

> "His countenance to man are daylight hues,
> And sky, and sea, and forests, lakes, and hills,
> And lightnings, thunders, and prodigious storms,
> And suns, and all the company of worlds."

And even more splendidly than in these did men see his face and hear his voice, in that unpretending Teacher who spoke to the hearts of his disciples in the mingled tones of nature and revelation, reason and miracle, and bade them "Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they toil not," said he, "neither do they spin; and yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these;" who asked, "Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered." And, assembling in his name to contemplate the truths of his doctrine, and imbibe the spirit of his gospel, do we not feel that God the Father is with us and among us; that our souls have communion with him; and that the holy intercourse of our minds with that great Being, in the duties of social devotion, should be

a pledge of unreserved confidence in his government, submission to his injunctions, and delight in his service? We cannot wish to escape, or to be unconscious of, his presence, unless guilt be on our consciences, punishment before our apprehensions, and the disturbing influences of folly over our intellect, blinding it to our real good. Let us cherish the assurance and the sense of the reality of that presence. It is holy motive, it is consolation, it is happiness, it is heaven, to feel that, by night and by day, through all changes of external circumstances or internal emotion, physically and morally, and for ever, "in Him we live, and move, and have our being."

Sermon XII.—The same Subject continued.

"Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father" (Matt. x. 29).

My object in this and the preceding discourse is to show (to use the words of the venerable Lindsey) that "all things are from God, and for good to all;" that Providence is strictly universal, extending to every concern of every being; and that the contemplated result is not merely general, but particular; not only the greatest sum of good to the aggregate of rational creatures, considered as a whole, but also the greatest sum of good to every individual, separately considered. In advancing towards this conclusion, three difficulties have been discussed, and I hope satisfactorily disposed of. The first is that which relates to beings or events which we are apt to deem too *minute*, mean, and trifling to be the objects of providential care, superintendence, and design. This is directly met by the text, which adopts for exemplification one of the most worthless and despised tenants of the air, as if for the very purpose of confronting the Christian doctrine of Providence with the notion that any thing can be beneath the attention of the Universal Lord, or excluded from the plans of Infinite Benignity. It is indeed a difficulty of feeling rather than of reason, the creature of social prejudice and not of accurate observation, an impulse and not a conviction. Grand and mean, important and trifling, are terms which rather express the relations of things to us, than the relation of any to their common Maker. The admission of a Provi-

dence at all decides this matter. God "must stoop to view the skies;" if he does that, the objection is at an end. There is no further dereliction of dignity in his observing and regulating the earth, or the crawling of the meanest insect on its surface. The second difficulty is the seeming existence of *chance*, which the savage sees every where, the enlightened Christian nowhere. It is a difficulty ever diminishing; a notion that retreats a step, every step that knowledge advances. Physical science banishes it from the material world; the philosophy of the mind banishes it from the intellectual world; Christian theology banishes it from the moral world. The events designated by it are only those of which we cannot trace the causes, of which we do not perceive the design, but of which it would be most irrational to infer that they flowed from no causes or tended to no object. With reference to many, more continued attention ascertains both; and where it does not, yet the analogy with those which are traced is so close, the induction which establishes the laws of matter and of mind is so complete, that we have the strongest presumption for their obtaining also in those cases where the limits of our knowledge prevent our actually demonstrating their existence. The third difficulty considered was, that some events seem to be the undesigned and *uncontemplated result* of general laws, in the same way as rules or maxims laid down by societies for their guidance, for certain purposes, have often an influence which was not anticipated; or as a machine framed for some particular operation has some incidental effect, useful or mischievous, which the inventor never dreamed of. But these things arise from men's overlooking some important circumstance. There was something unknown to the contrivers, or disregarded by them. They are evidence of an imperfection which cannot be ascribed to the Omniscient God. He made those laws, from their confined apprehensions of the nature and operations of which even the wisest men fail of realising their own purposes, or bring about that which they never purposed. If every result of those laws, in all their combinations, had not been agreeable to his will, they would have been otherwise ordained, so as to insure its accomplishment. Nor must a law be confounded with a power; which power is voluntarily exerted in conformity with that law. The

course of nature is, equally with miracle, the work of God. Laws of nature are only the ways in which Divine power usually works. God gives the light of every day, as much as if it were given by miracle. Every recurrence of it is his deed; it is merely a repeated act. We cannot impute the want of design to the Deity in what he does. The result cannot be uncontemplated. "All things are of God."

There is now a fourth difficulty before us, which has often impeded the recognition of the universality of Divine Providence: there are events which seem worse than fortuitous, which are thought to imply malignity, the perpetration of crime, the infliction of useless suffering.

Yet, to advert first to men's vices, it is evident, in some cases, that they must have been included in the plan of Providence, and that they are essential to it. The call of Abraham was the first link in that chain of extraordinary events, the record of which is the word of God, and which sustains whatever is noblest in our enjoyments or hopes. But this implied the lapse of the human race into idolatry after the flood, without which no such event as the call of Abraham could have taken place; and that apostasy was itself the result of anterior events, and of the condition of mankind. It must have been designed and produced for the sake of this. The deliverance of Israel was evidently in the plan of God; the subject of promise and prediction; the preparation for events of eternal moment to humankind. But that implied the tyranny and obstinacy of Pharaoh. The supremacy and glory of Jehovah could not have been so splendidly displayed had not his heart been hardened. Moreover, the public execution of Christ, so essential to the moral influence of his resurrection, implied the triumphant malice of his enemies; and, as the apostle tells us, "by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God was he taken, and crucified, and slain." These are cases in which revelation has left us no choice as to our exposition of the events. There is the explicit declaration of the language, the facts, the principles of scripture. Whatever further considerations may be involved, here is the explicit reference of certain atrocious crimes to the plan of Providence. This is matter of fact. How we account for it, how we reconcile it with the Divine holiness and benignity, is another question, to which I shall soon refer.

The fact is clear, and so is the inference that all vice may be so referred. There can be no greater difficulty in other offences than in these, nor any principle applied to these which is not also adequate to *their* solution.

For the existence of some suffering in the world we can readily account, and we easily associate it with the doctrine of a Providence, and find in it illustration of the benignity of that Providence. There is much pain, the annihilation of which would also be the annihilation of an immense preponderance of pleasure. This is evident from the fact that men voluntarily submit to the pain, in order that they may enjoy the pleasure. They inflict it, in paternal love, upon their children, for their children's ulterior enjoyment. How much that tends to bodily health, strength, and activity is of this description! The irksomeness of restraint is gladly borne, or kindly imposed, as the price of sensations only thus to be purchased. This is an analogy for much that Providence does in paternal love. Health would be an unmeaning word, were there no sickness in the world. There are limits within which its interruption gives a thousand delicious sensations, and is a positive blessing, if the increase of enjoyment is a blessing. Here there is no difficulty; nor is there any in sufferings which have moral results on the individual. The pain which turns a sinner from the error of his ways is obviously pain sent by Providence for his good; it is suffering which saves him from heavier suffering; it is a sorrow which bringeth forth joy: and in like manner that which, though it may operate on a good and pious mind, yet clearly effects the improvement of that mind, removes some lingering stain that sullied its purity, destroys some spot that dimmed its brightness, is readily referred to Providence. The difficulty is in cases where suffering only leaves the sinner hardened; where, as in prosperity he had scorned, in adversity he blasphemes; or where misery seems scattered at random over the earth; or where, as often, on the best and purest of our race, the holiest and kindest, fall the heaviest visitations of sorrow, inflicting most where least seemed needed, either for correction or improvement. These are the events that cloud men's minds, and stagger their faith, and conjure up a thousand dark and superstitious dreams of independent evil principles warring against the good, and bend them in

loathing adoration of blind fate or blinder chance, and induce their imaginations to limit the benevolence of God, or his power to give that benevolence effect, or the extent of the dominion in which his wisdom, power, and love are exercised.

And now to meet this. The brief statement of the difficulty is, that, such events taking place, either all things are not included in the design of Providence, or Providence does not design that which is best for every individual. This is the alternative to which the objection reduces itself. The first branch of it is already disposed of. It is finally settled by the scriptures; by the text, which takes an extreme case of seeming minuteness, chance, and unregarded result of general laws; by the great principles of revelation, which ascribe every thing to God, the light and darkness of the moral and material world; by the facts of sacred history, which demonstrate the inclusion in the Divine plan of offences as atrocious, and of suffering as unmerited, as can be found in the history of any people, or have fallen under the observation of any individual. And that in this persuasion we rightly interpret the scriptures, has been shown by independent reasonings, drawn forth by the objections and difficulties, as in succession they were noticed, which irresistibly conduct us to the same conclusion. The universe is as a body of which God is the soul; with this difference, that every atom in it obeys his volition with an exactness which the human frame never yields to the intellectual or vital principle.

Having proved, then, that every thing is made and done by Providence, are we really driven, and by that very proof, to the other branch of the alternative, that the aim of Providence is not that which is best for every individual? I think not; I am most firmly convinced not; at the same time, I should perhaps find it difficult to impart that conviction to the mind of another. With an individual whose mind had been embarrassed on the subject, I would attempt it thus—I would say, Come to this subject calmly. Strong feeling is not the best medium through which to discern truth. You have been affected, and even agitated, perhaps, by witnessing the distresses of some whom you deservedly hold in high regard. You cannot see why *they* should suffer; your intimate knowledge of their ex-

cellence, and your intimate knowledge also of the bitterness that wrings their hearts, combine to increase the strength of your emotions, and aggravate the painfulness of your sympathy. Endeavour to quell these sensations, and enter into the inquiry as you would in the moments when, joyous yourself, you had only to "rejoice with them that do rejoice." Come to this subject in a spirit of humility. I do not mean by humility a disposition to receive any doctrine, explanation, or argument, on authority. That exhortation is the poor resource of pretenders to spiritual domination, who would silence the reason which they cannot convince, and whose exercise they dread. But come prepared to find difficulties, and to admit—for, as a rational being, you are bound to admit—general principles which by reason and scripture are fairly established, though after all there may be many particular cases in which the feebleness of your faculties, and the limitation of your knowledge, will prevent your distinctly seeing their application. It is one thing to ascertain a law of material nature, and another to refer with perfect accuracy every phenomenon to that law. Many a philosopher does the one, who is baffled by the other; but whose conviction is not, and ought not to be, the less firm on that account. Thus it is also in the ways of Providence. It is enough for us that the general principles of the Divine government are unfolded to a rational faith; and it well becomes us, as to much of their operation, to be resigned to seeing through a glass darkly, in the hope that what we know not now, we shall know hereafter. I would then say, Where is your difficulty? Is it that you think the combination of what is best for the individual with what is best for the whole, a combination which cannot be made; one which is impossible in itself? —or that you think God does not choose to make it? In the latter case, you limit his benevolence. You suppose him to prefer a smaller portion of good to a greater. You imply that he might produce happiness in a superior degree, but that he only produces it in an inferior degree. You deny, by the supposition, the infinity of that love whose infinity is demonstrable. I know you do not mean this; that your mind and heart disclaim it as an imputation on both; and it is therefore that I urge it, that you may fairly look in the face the consequences of your own

supposition, and discard it instantly. Perhaps you will say that, though you believe the infinity of divine love, yet you must judge concerning it by facts; that the world might have had more happiness in it than there is; that it might have been without sin and suffering altogether; that those who endure sickness might have been preserved in health; that those who are converted by sorrow might have never fallen; that those whom judgment shall consign to the awful chastisements of futurity might have been corrected here. I reply, It is well to reason from facts, but reason from them consistently; do not draw one conclusion to-day, and another to-morrow; do not attempt to make them the basis of conclusions which are opposite and contradictory. The facts just alluded to prove that God is not infinitely benevolent; or, as to the argument in hand, they prove nothing. But his benevolence has other and conclusive proof, which these cannot destroy. That proof cannot be reconciled with the limitation of his love; but these facts may be reconciled with its boundlessness; for these are partial facts: they relate to the commencement of the existence of immortal beings; they are a part of a plan embracing the universe, and stretching into eternity; they have a thousand results and influences which we cannot trace; and they are very capable of being reconciled to the infinity of his love by the assumption that evil has a temporary existence, both with individuals and the whole, for the final production of greater good. Will you say, then, that the combination in question is impossible in the nature of things? that God's doing every thing for the good of the whole implies the sacrifice of what is best for some individuals to that good? This seems rather a presumptuous supposition. The impossibility is by no means obvious. It may sometimes so happen in human governments; but the analogy will not hold. It happens there because men's temporal interests may be—or at least they are so thought; I only allow it for argument—in irreconcilable opposition. It may be here the interest of one class that commerce should be restricted; and of another, that it should be unrestricted. That which enriches some may ruin others. Statesmen in such cases are driven to a calculation between them. They may be compelled to sacrifice the few to the many. The good of the whole may

be the injury of the individual. This cannot be the case in the moral government of God. There is no opposition in men's spiritual, real, eternal interests. The greatest good of one subject of that government is founded on the same principles as that of all the rest; that of each consists in conformity with the moral image of God, and in enjoying his blessing. The very circumstance which makes the difficulty in an earthly government has no existence in the kingdom of heaven; and though it is certain that the general good of the human race has been, and still is, promoted by the severe suffering of some of its purest members, yet that does not prove that such sufferings were not also best for the individual. To take the extreme and singular case of our Lord himself, in whom we see the bitterness of suffering without the taint of sin: was it not *best for him* that he so suffered? There were no evil habits to be corrected; but was not his character raised by it to the supremacy of excellence? Was he not "made perfect through sufferings"? Did not the influence of those sufferings on the condition and prospects of mankind give him a god-like pleasure, which no other creature ever knew, which he could never else have known? Besides, would there not be confusion in our thoughts, or solecism in our language, if, while we allowed that God did what was best for the whole, we denied, or doubted, his doing that which was best for every individual? The one is included in the other. For if, of all the millions of beings, the lot of any one is not, ultimately and upon the whole, the best for him, that is, so far, a deduction from the good of the whole, and Divine benevolence is not strictly infinite, and the universe has not the sum of felicity which it might have had. The impartiality of the Divine love disproves such a supposition. If to the good of the whole some sacrifice is made of individual good, on whom does it fall? On what principle are the victims selected? That they are less graciously dealt with than others, would demonstrate that God loved them less than others. It would show him to be, so far, a partial God. It would admit the worst principle of the worst theology. No! he loves all his rational children alike; and if his Providence designs that which is best for but one of the human race, it does also that which is best for every one. Nor is this conclusion so astonishing as it

at first sight appears. Consider the wonderful attributes of God. The power which made and supports the universe; which operates infinitely, incessantly, and eternally; which is put forth every instant, wherever there is existence; which knows no difficulty, acts by mere volition, and is indeed the only power that exists; the wisdom which combines the past, the present, and the future; which knows all beings, all qualities, and all their modified operations; which is conscious of every thought of all that think, of every movement of unconscious matter; the goodness which delights in the production, diffusion, and perpetuation of happiness; which glories in the felicity it causes; and has all the supremacy, infinity, and unchangeableness of him to whom it belongs,—is it strange that such a Being should plan and effect the combination of individual and general good, in the greatest amount of each? Strange! it would be strange and incredible if he did not. It is a work worthy of him: it is the glory of God.

Oh, may we feel, as well as believe, for ourselves and others, this consolatory doctrine! It is rich in fruits of piety, resignation, faith, and benevolence. Not hard should be the task of confiding in Him whose power is so adequate, and whose purposes are so benignant. It is our confidence, our trust, our faith, that he peculiarly requires, and that the gospel teaches us to exercise. There were no need of faith, nor any trial of it, were every event in Providence at once intelligible and joyous. Nor would the ultimate sum of happiness be so great, nor would the Christian be so pure a character. We should then walk by sight, not by faith. The path might be less arduous, but it would not conduct to the same pinnacle of enjoyment. Far better is it for us to exercise confidence in our heavenly Father's guidance, and follow the Saviour, who, like an elder brother, waves us on to the mansions of peace and bliss. Yet a little while, and the chequered scenery of existence shall be all irradiated by the light of heaven. Then will our ignorance and our wavering frailty be subdued together. The prayer will be granted—

> "What in me is dark,
> Illumine; what is low, raise and support;
> That to the height of this great argument
> I may assert ETERNAL PROVIDENCE."

Sermon XIII.—Social Duty.

[A New-Year's Sermon to the Young.]

"And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise" (Luke vi. 31).

The subject to which I would call the attention of my young friends on the present occasion is this—the best preparation for discharging the social duties of life.

It is a proper and useful custom to dedicate the first service in the year peculiarly to the improvement of the young. It is called for by the importance of the rising generation, and by the deep interest which every benevolent and reflecting person must feel in their welfare, and in the manner in which they will hereafter sustain their parts on the great stage of human life. At the same time, I must say, that I fail of my object in addressing you from time to time, if the younger part of my auditory do not find the services generally intelligible and interesting. Nor does the appropriateness of this discourse to their circumstances and duties exonerate the elder portion of this assembly from attention; for it will involve much, the performance of which they may promote and assist in the young; and some things, perchance, about which it may be neither useless nor needless to consult their own consciences, and which they may profitably apply to their own hearts and conduct.

Youth is the season of preparation. Almost every thing, my young friends, which you do, except your mere sports and amusements, has, as you know, a reference to the future time when you shall have arrived at maturity and have taken your station in the world. You are almost constantly preparing for the trade or profession by which you are to occupy your time, and acquire or increase your pecuniary means of support or enjoyment. But there is something besides to be done in the world, and which needs preparation too. You have a higher duty to yourselves than that of getting money, or the pleasures which money will purchase—the duty which arises from your character as moral, accountable, and immortal beings. You have a duty most imperative to the God who made you, and whose blessing peculiarly attends those who remember their Creator in the

days of their youth. And you have through life duties to discharge to your fellow-creatures, in your fulfilment of which society has a strong interest; though no interest in it can be stronger than your own; which you cannot fail to perceive, if you have arrived at any thing like correct notions of what constitutes the excellence of human character, and leads to the highest degree of human happiness.

Perhaps you may think it rather needless to urge upon you much preparation for so simple a thing as doing to others as ye would that they should do unto you. You may say: "This is all very plain, it requires no study, there is no mystery in it, it is all very easy, there seems no particular difficulty about it; we hope we shall always do so, and we hope others will act by us on the same principle." Very well; it does seem so. Yet if you look about you, you will probably see many instances in which this simple and right principle is very grossly departed from, and that by persons whose early lives had full as many advantages as your own. The world would be a much better world did every body find it quite so easy. Or, instead of looking to others, look to yourselves. Have you no recollection of doing to others that which you would not on any account have had them do to you? Can I ask the question without calling up to your minds a consciousness of the fact? You have already, then, found by experience that there is some difficulty about doing "to others as ye would that they should do unto you." And if there be some difficulty already, you may reasonably expect that there will be greater difficulty hereafter, when your station will be a more important one, and you will have much more important concerns with your fellow-creatures. Preparation for meeting and overcoming those difficulties may be therefore very desirable.

It is so on another account. One of the beauties and perfections of this Christian rule of social action is, that it is expansive, and grows, in its beneficial consequences, along with the growth in mental and moral character of the individual by whom it is practised. Let a fool do as he would be done by, and the world will be perhaps a little—certainly but a little—the better for it. He means well; and for his well-meaning, society will love him and God will bless him. But let a wise man do as he would be done by, and the

world will be very largely the better for it. The moral principle is the same in both; but the benefit to society is as much more exalted in the one than in the other, as wisdom is above folly. Now, wisdom and folly may exist as to some subjects, and not as to others, in the same mind. He may be a fool in morals who is no fool in mathematics; and he may be a fool in mathematics who is no fool in business. Previous attention and preparation, if it does not make the whole difference, makes a very material part of it. Could there be found two minds precisely equal in all respects save this single one of the preparation I am now urging,—the same strength, the same activity, the same acquirement and exercise, and both determined on doing to others as they would that others should do unto them; but the one mind having been previously disciplined, trained, and prepared, the other not,—I say that that one (the principle being precisely the same) would contribute a decidedly larger portion than the other to the happiness of society, would constitute a much more valuable member of the community, would earn a larger tribute of gratitude from mankind, and consequently a brighter crown of glory from the Judge. This is a difference, then, worthy of consideration.

My first lesson in this preparation is, to get a *distinct notion* of social duty, of virtue, morality, or whatever name you prefer calling that by which you ought to regulate your conduct to others. Do not say you will trust your conscience for this. If you do, I trust you will have a good conscience, for it will be greatly needed. The value of conscience is in proportion to its activity and enlightenment. Its office is that of a judge, not a legislator; and if an imperfect or erroneous moral code be adopted by the intellect, its enforcement by conscience only encourages the mistake, and puts the heart and life in the wrong. Paul was conscientious when he persecuted. Study your duty, and you will the better do your duty. Simple as the text appears and is, its application requires thought. Suppose you have been robbed, and detected the offender, and say to yourself, Were I in this situation, I should wish to escape punishment. This would not be a legitimate use of the doctrine. And why? Because there is not only the offender to put yourself in the place of, but the rest of society; your un-

offending neighbours, the security of whose persons and property you are thus impairing. Put yourself in their place; you then come to a different conclusion. Which is the right conclusion? The answer to this involves the notion of duty, of morality, the first principles of your moral philosophy; for every one has a moral philosophy, only in some it remains obscure, ill-digested, and inconsistent, for want of attention. But the right conclusion? I should say that which subserves the greatest happiness of the greatest number. In my view, that is goodness, that is virtue, that is morality, that is public and private right, that is social duty. This principle is a deduction from the text, which does not lay down a principle, but furnishes an appeal—the best and noblest and mightiest appeal ever made—to the power of feeling, to carry a principle into action. You would be happy? It is the object of existence to every conscious being. So far as others can affect your happiness, you would have them promote it. This, then, is your duty to them. The aim of your social being is the largest promotion of happiness. And how?

I proceed to my second lesson of preparation by indicating one of the means for ascertaining how. *Acquire self-knowledge.* Study your own hearts. Ask of them what are the essentials of human happiness. Do not take a reply from the mere dictates of the senses, the buoyancy of the animal spirits, the paintings of fancy, or the distortions of the passions. Go deeper for an answer, if you are in earnest to obtain an oracle of truth. Analyse the effect upon you of what the world calls pleasure, and see if it either be, or produces, happiness. Do you rest upon it, permanently, in enjoyment, and in recollection, and on reflection, with satisfaction? Compare its emotions with those which attend upon actions of gratitude, of kindness, of disinterestedness. Inquire into your own dispositions and propensities. Watch their operations and effects from day to day, from week to week, and from month to month. See which class —the grossly selfish ones or the beneficent—are the fit and sure agency of happiness. All this is most important; all this is essential for your own sakes. It must be done, or you will commit fatal mistakes, and become the fabricators of your own wretchedness. But that is not to my present purpose. I am taking it in connection with social duty.

In this manner must you learn what, in your best judgment, you would have others do to you. It is thus that you learn not to wish them to minister, I will not say to your vices, but to your follies and vanity. You realise the idea of that happiness which—as you would possess it yourself, and have it promoted in yourself by others—it should be the great object of your life, as a social being, to advance in them, in all the world. The man who knows himself most thoroughly is, so far, the most thoroughly qualified to be the friend of man.

My next lesson of preparation is, to *study human nature*, as it exists in the minds and feelings of others; to advance beyond a knowledge of its general principles, which are identical in all, to an acquaintance with its individual diversities. This is a most desirable acquisition to those who would be agents for the production of happiness; that is, who would discharge social duty. The effect of what you say or do upon others depends not only on what it is, but on their intellect, feelings, and character. Ask an engineer how far a cannon-ball, of a given size, density, and velocity, will penetrate into any substance, and he will tell you that yet another element is wanting in the calculation; that he must know something of that substance, of its density, of its power of resistance. He will tell you that the whole result is a combination, in which, to arrive at a just conclusion, the qualities of that which acts are not more needful to be known than those of that which is to be acted upon. So it is with human actions and beings. People often defeat their own schemes of giving enjoyment to others by not attending to this. They forget to consult, and, as far as they are not vicious, to conform to, the tastes, feelings, habits, of those whose happiness they would promote, and think only of their own; and then complain of the inefficiency of their efforts, perhaps the ingratitude of the objects of those efforts. The circumstances of age, of station, the presence or absence of a considerable degree of intelligence, feeling, refinement, make a wonderful difference in the way in which we can minister to others' comfort. In spite of identity of intention, that may almost be felt as an insult by one which would afford another unmixed gratification. Now, what you would be done unto, is assuredly to have your own feelings thus consulted by others. This, then,

is what you should do. And train yourself for it by observation; by habits of kindness and forbearance and accommodation; by the tolerance of whatever is innocent, and the active promotion, in that limit, of whatever tends to happiness.

Further, school yourselves to *humility* as social beings, and early attend to the fact that you can commonly do much more by avoiding annoyance to others than in the direct production of happiness. I speak generally, and of things in their ordinary course. It is high, and almost unimaginable, praise by a parent, of a child grown up to maturity, that that child never gave him pain. What a blessed improvement were it in the intercourse of families and friends, could this be said from time to time! Make it an object in the moral education of your own hearts. Despise it not as an aim too lowly. *The great mass of human suffering is of human creation.* He who in any proportion keeps down the evils of life does not live in vain. His is a rare and an enviable excellence who never does that which he would not have done to him.

Prepare yourselves for performing your duty towards man by practising your duty towards God. The connection is most intimate between genuine devotion and beneficent morality. Superstition may be allied with licentiousness; ceremony may be united with the grossest selfishness. The religious feelings and acts of genuine Christianity form the soul for pure and generous emotion, for honourable and useful conduct. The heart still less than the body can be the servant of two masters. If it be the temple of God, it cannot be the shrine of Mammon. If the divine spirit of purity and love dwell there, envy, sensuality, malice, cannot make it a den of demons. The mere contemplation of the life-giving and bliss-giving Deity must produce in you something of the same moral lustre. Habitual communion with God must make you grow like God. The act of prayer is one of solemn renunciation of all injurious feelings; the solemn adoption of all beneficent emotions and intentions. You cannot make this, from day to day, and year to year, without doing good to man from day to day, and from year to year. With the Christian character of God implied, the exclamation concerning Paul, "Behold he prayeth," was equivalent to, Behold he

no longer persecuteth. If a man's enlightened prayer be for the blessing of God, his consistent conduct will be a blessing upon man.

The only other admonition I shall offer is, study the most exalted examples of beneficence. Read the lives of those whose goodness has immortalised their names on earth—the benefactors of body and of mind; from such men as Socrates and Cato in ancient times and heathen countries, to such as Fénélon and Howard in later days: make them your favourite themes, and look on their unstained laurels with a fond admiration which I trust your moral sense is too pure to allow you to bestow on the more imposing but sanguinary splendour of military prowess. Look to the elevated characters of scripture, and imbibe their spirit. Single out for meditation such events as Joseph forgiving his brethren; Moses bearing with the obstinacy of Israel; Joshua resolving for himself and his family to serve the Lord, though they should stand alone in an apostate generation; David, after his many provocations, sparing the life of his royal persecutor, Saul, in the cave of Engedi; look at the heroic zeal of the apostles, bearing blessings to the nations, though curses and tortures assailed every step they took in their benignant mission; and, above all, look unto Jesus, "who went about doing good." These are the pictures for your imagination to dwell upon. These are the models whose study will make you proficients in the divine art of beneficence. These are the mental companions in whose society you will make life a cheerful and a cheering pilgrimage to heaven.

Thus will you go forth into the world thoroughly furnished unto all good works. Your charities will be not only pure in their principle, but wise in their execution. You will do the good you intend; in which charity has too often failed. The habit of entering into others' minds and feelings will confer delicacy, propriety, and efficacy on your sympathetic kindness. Your judgment having been previously exercised on such subjects, and devotion constantly influencing, guiding, impelling, you will act promptly and perseveringly in all that can benefit mankind. You will be a treasure in the world, a pillar in the church of Christ, and adorn the doctrine of your God and Saviour in all things.

I have taken some things for granted all through this discourse. It is for you to say whether they are unwarrantable assumptions. I have supposed that to fulfil social duty is an object with you. If it be not, all my rules and maxims for preparing you to do it efficiently are thrown away. But if you do not intend to do your duty, what do you intend? To quaff the cup of pleasure at any price? To harden your hearts till you become hateful even in your own eyes, as you must? To cheat society, as it were, by reaping good, but making no return, till at the last you are summoned to the judgment? To "heap up wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God"?

But these cannot be your intentions—not your avowed intentions, even to yourselves. Beware of the conduct of which they may be offered as the interpretation. If not, then you will act on my suggestions. Then I have not been rash in this assumption. I have rightly supposed that you wish and pray to be of use to your fellow-creatures; that the existence of happiness is a delightful contemplation to your mind; that you can "gather bliss to see your fellows blest." Little will he care for this preparation whose mind never realises the enjoyment of others as a desirable and final object. Nor has he the spirit of Christ. The good done to others by his gospel is called "the joy set before him." And to him it was the most coveted joy, and acted as the mightiest motive. Thus may our souls anticipate the diffusion of righteousness and felicity. Thus may we give a present existence in our minds to the good which may flow from our efforts long after we are in our graves. And finally, I have assumed that you are looking to a heaven of benevolent felicity as the end of your earthly course. If benevolence be the essence of heaven's bliss, it must be of earth's duty. You are commencing a work which extends into eternity. Your youthful thoughts and discipline and devotions are a preparation for a life of eminent usefulness; as that is a preparation for a glorious crown of immortality. The grandest prospects are before you; and be heaven's blessing on you as you feel them expand your hearts, and raise your thoughts, and animate your purposes. Go, then, from the house of God to your homes, to be their ornament and support; go into the

world, to be its consistent, enlightened, unobtrusive, constant benefactors; go, when Heaven wills it, sooner or later, to the grave, feeling that love is stronger than death, charity an immortal principle, and man's gratitude the harbinger of God's approval; go to the bar of judgment to receive the crown of glory, and enter heaven as a place of congenial society and congenial occupation—the abode of the spirits of just men made perfect, who live, in love and in God, the life eternal.

Sermon XIV.—The Beneficence of Christ.

"Who went about doing good" (Acts x. 38).

The beneficent character of Jesus is with great propriety introduced by the apostle Peter into the account of Christianity which he gave to Cornelius; for, next to the miracle of his resurrection, that character may be regarded as the most extraordinary and striking feature of the evangelical history: the one was scarcely more out of the ordinary course of things than the other. A man whose enemies could not convict him of sin, and who added to innocence the highest degree of active goodness, may be regarded as alike singular with a man raised from the dead to immortality. The goodness of Christ was the glory of his disciples, and the chief thing wherein, as to him personally, they had to glory; for, bred and living in poverty, possessing the splendour neither of learning nor of wealth, not crowned with the diadem of authority, and having been put to ignominious death as a malefactor, and in company with malefactors, they were deprived of most topics on which the disciples of other masters made their boast: but they had this; and it was worth, and far more than worth, them all. His beneficence also belonged both to the evidence and to the influence of the Christian scheme. It was one important voucher of the truth of the gospel; it was one distinguished source of the moral power of the gospel. The contemplation of it banishes suspicion of imposture in him, and inspires the admiration and love of goodness in us. It furnishes the rule of that duty for which his resurrection supplies the motive of a future state. Nay, his example is to a certain extent both rule and motive in itself, inasmuch as so lovely

an exhibition of goodness wins the heart to its imitation. And there was another connection by which the mention of it was drawn into the apostle's discourse; for, as he had just stated the singular extent of miraculous power with which Jesus was endowed, it was but natural to refer also to the singular beneficence of its exercise; and if we attentively read the gospel record, we must observe, that notwithstanding the miraculous nature of a large proportion of our Lord's actions, they yet did really display his personal character, as much as that of ordinary men is elicited by ordinary circumstances. That this was the particular reference of the text is obvious from its following the declaration, that "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the holy spirit and with power;" and introducing that of his "healing all that were oppressed of the devil" (a Jewish description of disease), "for God was with him."

Whether Jesus was so vested with miraculous power as that its exercise was properly discretionary, is a difficult question, and seems most reasonably answered in the negative. We cannot suppose that power to have so resided in him as that he could have exerted it, had he been disposed, for selfish or malignant purposes. At the same time, the Providence which destined him for his great work had previously so formed his character, and trained him to such exalted piety and goodness, that the disposition to abuse it had become a moral impossibility. The power, strictly speaking, was only possessed and exercised by the Deity. He who is said to work a miracle, in fact merely predicts it. Those of Christ were in answer to prayer, which was uniformly granted. This we learn from his language at the grave of Lazarus: "Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me; and I know that thou hearest me always." Though not the absolute power, therefore, yet the feeling of compassion, the desire to relieve, the application to Heaven on each occasion that it might be then exercised—these were his own; that is, all the moral appendages of the act, all that make it indicative of character and demonstrative of benevolence; and to these we must also add his manner to the sufferers, so full of pity and kindness, of gentleness and generosity. These considerations place his miracles, as to moral character, as nearly as possible on the same footing as if they had been the spontaneous acts of his own power.

If those acts did not include the relief of every kind of suffering to which human nature is liable, they yet extend to a most astonishing variety. Could their objects have been congregated in one assembly in the state in which they were before they met this minister of heaven for mercy, what an appalling mass of wretchedness would they have presented! There would be the helpless cripple, moving but at the will and by the charitable aid of others; chained to his couch more potently than by iron fetters; conscious, perhaps, of coming danger, but with no power to resist its attack or to fly its approach. There would be those for whom there was "neither sound nor language," parted from the rest of mankind by a gulf, seemingly impassable as that in the parable; not even, like that, allowing communication, except imperfectly, by sight and signs, across its dreary depth. There, the blind—those who had been so from their birth, and to whom the loveliness of nature's face was a mystery, heard of, but incomprehensible; to whom every volume was sealed like that of prophecy; whose days were nights, and their life but a dismal dream. Or those on whom such calamities had fallen after they had felt the worth of what they lost; whose powers of sense had gone, leaving memory to aggravate the wretchedness of their absence; who were, as to some of the purposes of existence, dead while yet they lived; and who, as if already some portion of them in the grave, recollected how, in irrevocable years, they had seen, or heard, or spoken, or freely rambled, and acted, and enjoyed, like others, on the mercy of whose superior powers, once their own, they were now dependent pensioners. There, those in whose veins the living blood no longer flowed a stream of health and energy and pleasure, but, lashed by fever, rushed a torrent of corruption and distraction. There, the epileptic, in the foul distortions of convulsion, foaming and falling, making hideous the human face and form, and blending even pity with an involuntary shuddering. There, others in the loathsomeness of leprosy, that disease of pollution and disgust, which cut man off from social intercourse, sent him without the city or the camp, and preyed upon his mind till that became diseased too, and sickened in self-abhorrence. There, insanity, in all its dreadful shapes, dreadful enough in any shape, from the drivellings of idiocy to the

ravings of madness; roaming the country to the terror of its inhabitants, or dwelling in the tombs, among the dead; insanity, rendered more frightful to others, and yet more awful to the individual, by the superstitions of the age, which ascribed it to demons taking possession of the man, speaking through his organs, revelling in infernal gambols in his brain, and making him the mere instrument of their unnatural agency. And besides these, there would even be some in whom the last earthly triumph of physical evil had been accomplished—the dead, with whom the hopes of friends and fond relatives had expired also, perishing with the last spark of life, or covered by the closing grave. There would be the child of Jairus, withered in her first blossoming, snatched from the love which was yet growing with her growth, and turning to despair the hope which had been strengthening with her strength. There, the young man of Nain, the widow's son, cut off in the prime and pride of life, the broken staff of her age, levelled when just taking his place in the ranks of society, to share its exertions and achievements. And there, Lazarus, in age and family and station yet more important, over whose grave, not only sisterly affection, but the veneration of neighbours, and the respect of those yet more distant, swelled the train of mourners. This, all this, was the scene of wretchedness for which Christ felt a brother's sympathy; for every separate portion of which there was a corresponding emotion of pity in his heart, which he transformed into a glorious theatre of joyousness; for at his word "the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up," and "to the poor" sufferers, or still poorer mourners, the "glad tidings were proclaimed" of a restoration which they had not dared to hope, and whose bliss made the overpowered heart relieve itself by tears of ecstasy, while those of anguish were yet undried upon the cheek.

Although this was immediately in the apostle's view, there are other parts of the ministry and life of Jesus to which we may apply the assertion, that "he went about doing good." It is eminently true of his instructions, regarding only their immediate effect. Was there a good man, anxious to discharge his duties, misled even by his own humility, which bowed his mind to rabbinical authority, and

clouded it with rabbinical traditions, and rendered him the slave of ceremonial observances, toiling day and night through prescribed forms? to him Jesus came, and, in words which were spirit and life, unfolded the real nature of the Mosaic system, and showed the summary of duty in loving God and man, and told him the time was come to worship the Father in spirit and in truth, for he sought such to worship him. The slave of ceremony became the exulting heir of Christian liberty; the Son made him free, and he was free indeed. Was there another, looking round in anguish on his country, the insolence of its Roman subjugators, the hypocrisy of its priestly rulers, the corruption of its multitudes, trembling as he read the denunciations of their ancient prophets with the foreboding of coming calamities, and waiting, but with that hope deferred which maketh the heart sick, for the redemption of Israel? To him Christ came. He came the authorised and proffered agent of Heaven for that redemption, beseeching Israel, even with tears, to heed the things of its everlasting peace; and if Israel resolved to perish, welcoming all who would save their own souls to an ark of mercy which would float safely over that desolation of fire and blood; and raising their minds to a far nobler redemption from the devouring grave, for all mankind. Was there an outcast of society, frowned at, scorned, and trampled on? He raised the wretch, and braved the opprobrium, and blessed the tear of penitence, and cherished returning goodness, and smiled on the offering of gratitude, and restored the image of God which crime had marred, and told of the joy in heaven over a recovered sinner. Was there a bigot in whose heart were strangely and ignorantly mingled the love of God and hatred of his offspring; to whom a Gentile was a dog, and a Samaritan an abomination; who saw in Abraham's children the covenanted people of Jehovah, and in all earth's millions besides only "vessels of wrath fitted to destruction"? To him Christ came; appealing, if he had children, to a parent's love, and bidding him reason thence to that of God; or pointing to that sun which shines on the just and on the unjust; or announcing, with warning voice, the fate of exclusive privileges abused; or telling, in more affecting tones, of the welcome that should await the returning prodigal; or answering the demand, Who is my neigh-

bour? by that tale which tells that, in spite of differences of country or religion, the feelings of humanity make man our neighbour and our brother. And such lessons did Christ teach, in house, village, or city, in the synagogue, or on the mountain's side, from morning till evening, from sabbath to sabbath, and from day to day. And his instructions were free for all to listen to; and to those who became his disciples, he declared again and again the words of his heavenly Father; and some such men as have been described he selected to be ever with him, that he might form their spirits to an excellence kindred with his own. But in his teaching he always looked beyond immediate results to remote consequences. In making disciples, he was making teachers to enlighten, convert, and regenerate the world. Each was to go forth, traversing first Judea, and then other regions, near or remote, as Providence might lead them, bearing the record of his words and deeds, his death and resurrection. Through them he was speaking with a thousand tongues to all the nations under heaven. They were darts which his mighty hand was sharpening to launch at all the multifarious idolatries and superstitions and miseries of humankind. By them he triumphed over Jewish bigotry, and Roman pride, and Grecian subtilty, and barbarian rudeness, and universal ignorance and vice. Every lesson he gave was thus a lesson to thousands and to millions; and he spoke at once to all countries and to all coming ages.

Nor did he do good only by direct effort for that specific object; his recorded example is itself an inestimable blessing; and thus he conferred a universal benefit by every word and action of his blameless life. When he retired for meditation and solitary prayer; when he went up with the multitude to the house of God; when he manifested the anxious tenderness of a son, and the steady regards of a friend; when he rejoiced with the joyous, and wept with the mourners; when his patience was unwearied by his disciples' errors, both of head and heart, which to a less enduring teacher had seemed incorrigible; when his meekness was unvanquished by calumny and insult; when he was agonised for the ungrateful country which rejected him; when he forgave his murderers, and delivered himself with holiest resignation to the will of God;—then was he doing good to

each and all at whom the knowledge of those facts has arrived, or shall arrive while the world stands; for they cannot be studied but to the amelioration of the heart and life.

The beneficent character of Jesus is an argument for the veracity of the gospel history, which, the more it is studied, and the greater the variety of points in which it is regarded, the more forcible does it appear. It has the important advantage of producing a moral impression while it convinces the understanding. It is a proof also which in some particulars will well bear repetition, and in others is not soon exhausted. I shall only notice now two circumstances indicative of its weight. For the first, I would remind the sceptic of the influences under which the minds and moral taste of the biographers of Christ were formed. That three out of the four were Jews, and that the fourth, if not a native, was a proselyte, is evident from the productions themselves. Putting the genuineness of the gospels, and still more their authority and the veracity of their writers, out of the question,—let them be the work of who they may,—both the external and the internal evidences compel the admission that they were written by Jews of about the period to which they are commonly assigned. This is all I ask. By what was the intellect of that age fashioned? and where did it learn what excellence was? From the Old Testament, rabbinical traditions, and the current opinions and prejudices of their countrymen. These were the influencing causes. That three Jews and a proselyte should all write a fictitious life, and make their master or hero work miracles, is very conceivable. But is it likely that all those miracles—with the single exception, in appearance, and probably that not in reality, of withering the barren fig-tree—should have been acts of beneficence to suffering individuals? Was there any thing to suggest this remarkable peculiarity in the miracles of Jesus? Were not those of the Old Testament commonly national, frequently retributory? Did not the hatred of their oppressors, the notion of a temporal Messiah, and the fierce spirit of the times, increase the improbability of their striking out a course so singular? That Jesus had called fire from heaven to consume a Roman centurion and his band; that he had moved Gerizim from its base to overwhelm a village of

Samaria,—such as these would have been the fictions of men whom some mighty impulse had not driven against the strongly flowing tide of national feeling; and by these they would have thought themselves glorifying their idol, more than by the most beautiful union of sympathy and power which the gospels record of him who was touched with the feeling of our infirmities. Howard is said to have trod an unfrequented path to fame; but the course of Jesus was not only unfrequented, but must have been unimagined by Jewish, and we may safely add by Gentile, minds, till it was actually traced, and even then its excellence was but slowly recognised.

For a second indication of the strength of this argument, look to Christian forgeries, to the apocryphal gospels. These were written by men who meant, in their way, to honour Christ, and who had before their eyes the benignant peculiarity on which we have been dwelling. Have they preserved it? "The son of Hannani coming to the fish-pool of Jesus to destroy it, the water vanished away; and the Lord Jesus said unto him, 'In like manner as this water has vanished, so shall thy life vanish:' and presently the boy died. Another time, when the Lord Jesus was coming home in the evening with Joseph, he met a boy, who ran so against him that he threw him down; to whom the Lord Jesus said, 'As thou hast thrown me down, so shalt thou fall, nor ever rise:' and that moment the boy fell down and died." Such work as this—so absurd and inconsistent, so in violation of that benignity which is absolutely uniform in the gospels, so deficient in moral perception—did forgers, Christian forgers, make of it when they attempted to honour by falsehoods him who went about doing good. Let unbelievers, if they will, magnify the antiquity of the apocryphal gospels, and the extent of their reception, and affect to place them by the side of the Evangelists; they do but render more illustrious that singular conception of excellence embodied in Jesus, which there was nothing previously existing to account for, nor subsequently invented to compete with; which is inexplicable but on the supposition of its reality.

The character of Christ is that of his religion. Christianity goes about doing good. It comes to the sceptic, who knows not God, and despairs of man, and sees nothing

beyond the grave; and the darkness of his soul breaks away before its heavenly beams, and he sees an almighty Father, and anticipates a life to come. It cheers the desponding philanthropist, shows him how past victories of evil have been but introductory to yet more splendid triumphs of good, develops the plan of Providence, and reconciles to the obscurity of the present working of that machinery which cannot fail to secure the amelioration of mankind. It comes to the dwellings of the poor; and the warmth of social affections, the smile of content, and the song of hope, attest the benignity of its presence. It reaches the sinner, and his humbled heart owns its power in penitence, and its mercy in the assurance of pardon. In the hour of temptation it comes, and the illusions of time quail before the realities of eternity. It watches the bed of sickness, ministering its cordial to the mind, soothing to resignation, and speaking peace. It stands by the grave undismayed, and declares that its victim shall be restored, that death shall die, and the God of the living assemble all his rational offspring around his eternal throne.

It is incumbent on the Christian to conduct himself in the spirit of his Master, and of his religion. They demand of him a beneficent activity; and not they only, but the circumstances of our times impose it as a duty. Every passion and principle of evil, all to which *they* were opposed, are active, and that for mischief. They go about producing misery. Ambition is active in trampling upon men, and Avarice for their plunder. Unbelief scatters its doubts, and Imposition sets up its creeds, and Fanaticism hurls about her firebrands. There are zealots for every cause of mental darkness and moral degradation; and to be supine is traitorous in the professed followers of Jesus, the worshipers of the universal Father, the lovers of humankind. Energetic usefulness is a debt to society, a test of sincerity, a passport to reward. Even the very act of your assembling here, in such a faith as we hold, for such a worship as we practise, is a pledge that when you separate, and go each one to the bosom of his family, the business of his occupation, the intercourse of society, through all the multiplied directions in which your paths of life may lead, and in all the diversified regions of exertion which Providence may open before you, you will go about doing good.

Sermon XV.

Christ's Conduct towards the Samaritans.

"For the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans" (John iv. 9).

The term "dealings" evidently, from the circumstances of the narrative, conveys somewhat too comprehensive a meaning to the English reader, inasmuch as the disciples of Christ, who were not till long afterwards distinguished by that character from other Jews, had at this very time gone into a Samaritan town to purchase provisions. It rather designates friendly intercourse. They would not drink out of the same cup, or sit at the same table. The common charities and courtesies of social life between them were interdicted by bigotry and mutual hatred. That this animosity did not extend further; that it did not stay all intercourse whatever, even for buying and selling; that it had any limits at all,—was not owing to its own weakness, or to the interposition of any benevolent or humane principle, but to the dictates of necessity in some cases, and the scarcely less powerful love of gain in others. The local situation of the country of Samaria, between Galilee and Judea, compelled many Jews frequently to travel across it, when their own accommodation and safety required that they should not appear solely in the character of enemies. The Samaritans had something of a similar dependence, at least on those who dwelt upon their borders. Nor could intercourse completely cease while traffic was profitable and wealth coveted. Commerce is not founded on character, nor does trade require moral sympathy. Men will meet in this world, to gain from them something of this world's good, those whom they neither expect nor wish to meet in the world to come. That the Jews had dealings of this sort with the Samaritans showed, not that their bigotry relaxed, but that their covetousness would not relax. Nor is it strange that their animosity was strong. The Samaritans held a land which had been the heritage of Israel. They were a perpetual memento of the captivity, exile, and dispersion of the ten tribes. They had received the Mosaic religion, but they received it imperfectly, and held it in a corrupt mixture with their own superstitions. Claiming affinity with the Jews when their affairs went well, they had

signally deserted them in some seasons of calamity. And often had they taken advantage of local facilities for annoying the Galileans in their progress to the festivals at Jerusalem. They had their rival temple on Gerizim, and stoutly asserted its superior claims to be the holy place of Mosaic worship. We can scarcely imagine circumstances more irritating than these must have been to Jewish feelings. I have noticed them as causes, not assigned them as excuses: whatever be their force as palliatives, they help us to form an adequate notion of the bitter associations which the term "Samaritan" would call up in the minds of the countrymen of Christ; as that again does something towards enabling us to perceive the contrast which his behaviour presented, and to comprehend the firmness, the caution, the generosity which it implied, the benevolent feeling in which it originated, and the useful influence which it would exercise. We must bear the one in mind to appreciate the other. I have adverted to the intensity of Jewish detestation merely as introductory to tracing throughout the evangelical history the conduct of Christ in relation to the Samaritans.

The whole of that conduct was directed to conciliation, to the removal of prejudice, to the mitigation and ultimate destruction of animosity, to the procuring of justice for the Samaritans as human beings, preparatory to union with them in the bonds of religious brotherhood. There are six instances on record, all bearing the same character, and having the same tendency. I shall adduce them in the order in which they occur.

1. The first may perhaps seem an exception to the general description just given, but it will not be deemed so when duly considered. It is the injunction to the apostles (Matt. xvi. 5), when he sent them forth, not to go into the way of the Gentiles, or to enter into any city of the Samaritans. This restriction was founded on the nature of that mission, and the then character of its agents. They were not sent forth to teach moral and religious truth generally, or what we peculiarly call the gospel. Their ministry was the simple proclamation of a fact: "As ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand." They were not even to announce that Jesus was the Messiah, but only that the dominion of the Messiah was about to commence.

This related especially, or solely, to the Jews. And though this might have been coupled, as in the ministry of Christ himself, with incidental instruction and benefit to the Samaritans, yet the apostles were not prepared for, or to be intrusted at that time with, such a task. They partook too largely of the prevailing antipathy. Theirs would not have been a ministry of reconciliation. The probable result would have been offence to the Jews, who would have been scandalised at their addressing themselves to the Samaritans at all, and irritation between them and the latter from the operation of their mutual prejudices. The prohibition was therefore a benevolent caution. It was the avoidance of a premature collision between those who would then have met as enemies, but who were afterwards brought together as friends and brethren. A precipitate zeal for the best objects has often done mischief. Its failure augments the difficulty, and postpones the period of success. The conduct of Christ to the Samaritans, in this prohibition, was that of a friend, benevolent but wise, averting present evil, while he was preparing for the communication to them, by the same apostles, with their minds enlightened and their hearts enlarged, of the best blessings and hopes of religion.

2. Luke records (ix. 51, &c.) that as Christ and his disciples went through Samaria towards Jerusalem, the inhabitants of a village where they intended to halt would "not receive him, because his face was as though he would go to Jerusalem. And when his disciples James and John saw this, they said, Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did? But he turned, and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. For the Son of Man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them. And they went to another village." This was by no means a solitary instance of annoyance to Jews in observing the requirements of their law. The Samaritans, deeming Gerizim the proper place of worship, felt and acted as too many nominal Christians are apt to do towards those whom they think in a wrong path. They did not use violence to compel them into another course, but they withheld the common courtesies of social life. Their disposition had similar dispositions to act upon. The disciples

were by no means backward to resent, and they afford one of a multitude of cases in which persecutors and persecuted were alike intolerant, and ready to change characters with a change of situation. A precedent occurred promptly to their minds, in the recorded miraculous destruction of a band of Samaritan soldiers. They yet knew so little of their Master as to suggest its imitation. His beautiful reproof taught them the inclusion of Samaritans in the precept he had given them to love their enemies. He applied to them the benignant purposes of his own mission, the benignant spirit of his religion. And if, as is probable, the other village to which he led them, and where the rights of hospitality seem to have been regarded, was Samaritan also, they had the double lesson of behaving with meekness towards persecutors, and of not involving in the charge of persecution all who may bear the same national or theological distinction with some who are guilty of it.

3. The next instance is the delivery of the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke x.). The leading circumstances of this beautiful tale were probably facts, and of recent occurrence. They would not else have so completely silenced the disputant to whom they were addressed. He had been tempting Christ, by demanding of him the terms of eternal life. Christ referred him to his own law, and elicited the confession that they consisted in loving God and our neighbour. But Jewish bigotry had restricted this latter term. They might apply it to a friend, but not to an enemy; to a Jew, but not to a Samaritan. He asks Christ's interpretation, and that is given in the parable. What answer could be made to such an exposition? Who could deny the neighbourhood of him who, when the fellow-countrymen of the sufferer, his fellow-religionists, the ministers of that religion even, had passed him by, and left him in his wretchedness, manifested a compassion so prompt and so efficient? There was the claim made out, to the conviction of both mind and heart. The demonstration was triumphant. The title of the Samaritan to brotherly affection and regard was involved in the fact that it was "he that showed mercy." Surely much of prejudice must have melted away from the minds of the hearers before a delineation whose truth and justice were as undeniable as its tendency was liberal and beneficent.

4. The miraculous healing of the ten lepers (Luke xvii. 11, &c.) is the next occurrence bearing upon our present subject. Of these it is implied that nine were Jews, and the tenth a Samaritan. They herded together in the misery of their common loathsomeness and expulsion from society. Our Lord directed them to present themselves to the priests, according to the Mosaic injunction; and as they went, they found themselves restored. One turned back to glorify God and bless his benefactor. Christ pointed out to his followers the striking fact that this one was the Samaritan. Facts give the proof here of Samaritan piety and gratitude, as before of Samaritan compassion. It was the care of Jesus that the lesson should not be overlooked or lost. He was at hand for its exposition and application. Events supplied the materials, and he readily combined them into machinery of moral power, and wielded its force directly against the sternness of Jewish animosity.

5. The whole of the transaction recorded in the chapter from which the text is taken is of similar character and tendency. The conversation with the woman of Samaria is one of the most beautiful things of the kind preserved in the evangelic history; we see in it how Jesus addressed himself to the removal of their prejudices, the softening of their antipathies, as well as those of their hostile neighbours. It was not the elevation of one party, but the union of both in Christian kindness, that he contemplated. He did not countenance the opposition of Gerizim to Jerusalem, but announced to the partisans of both the coming of the time when all systems of ceremony should be superseded by the spiritual, universal worship of the Infinite Spirit and common Father. Limited as was the influence of his teaching on the minds of his countrymen, his disciples could not but be gratified when he led them to a place where general respect was shown to his character, and a general disposition manifested to admit his claims, though that place was a village of Samaria. It was enlisting what must have been a strong feeling in their minds on the side of liberality and benevolence. It was guiding them by a sweet and sunny spot in that region which they had regarded as altogether a land of barrenness, offensiveness, and danger. It was breaking the old associations of disgust, and forming new ones, pleasant

to the memory, and tending to warm and to expand the heart.

6. It was an appropriate close of our Lord's conduct that, after his resurrection, when he was about to be parted from the earth, in his final commission to his apostles, he commanded them to be witnesses unto him, "both in Jerusalem and in Judea, and in *Samaria*, and unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts i. 8). Without that distinct mention, the terms of his command were universal. He was not satisfied while any opening was left for an exclusive feeling. He effectually put his language beyond the narrowing constructions which abound in the expositions of bigotry. He gave a text of benevolence incapable of perversion by the commentary of intolerance. He ascended to heaven, with the love of heaven in his heart, and on his lips love toward all the families of the earth.

Such conduct displays the *courage* of Christ. These were a series of attacks on one of the strongest prejudices of his time and country. It was violent, deep-rooted, universal; but it was pernicious, and therefore, in all the qualities that made it formidable, he only saw incitements to its demolition. Such *are* the prejudices that the friends of truth should grapple with, if they would render service to the human race. It displays his *prudence*. He assailed it not by ill-timed declamation; principles which, however true, might be disputed; and reasoning which, though not refuted, might leave the feelings unaffected;—but when the season served not, he was forbearing; when propitious, he advanced firmly yet gently; he appealed to facts which could be neither contradicted nor unfelt; and he led his disciples where the testimony of their senses was in opposition to the dictates of their prejudices, and corroborated his benign instructions. It shows his *benevolence*. The Samaritans had no peculiar claims on his interposition; at least, their claims were but those of being the objects of hatred and contempt—claims which are recognised only by benevolence. So far as related to himself, there was every earthly inducement to shun the appearance of being their friend, and to decline the perilous task of their advocacy. The circumstances were a test of philanthropy. They demonstrated his in all the strength of its generosity. It shows his *foresight*. The most important part of the good

to be accomplished was not immediate. Even complete success in inducing better feeling towards each other was not all the success at which he aimed. He had in view the state of things when he should be removed from the world; when his apostles would stand forth as heralds of his resurrection to all the earth, as promulgators of a universal religion. He acted with reference to that futurity; he prepared minds for its approach.

The immediate result of this conduct was calumny on himself. "He hath a demon. He is a Samaritan." Such was the ready outcry. Such is the too common reception of disinterested exertion. The alternative of folly approaching to insanity, or of concealed self-interest, is often the only alternative which the world will allow to those who act by the impulse of the noblest motives for the accomplishment of the noblest purposes. Too many are ready to dispute the existence of a virtue of which they are unconscious. Our Lord held on his course, undismayed and unchecked. The final result was his vindication. That was the early spread of his religion in Samaria. When persecution arose in Jerusalem, we read (Acts ix. 10), that "Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them. And the people, with one accord, gave heed unto those things which Philip spake." "And there was great joy in that city." And afterwards, that the apostles "preached the gospel in many villages of the Samaritans." And again: "When the churches had rest throughout all Judea and Galilee," so had they in "Samaria, and were edified, and, walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, were multiplied." And thus the conflict is brought to a fitting termination. The seed sown in tears is reaped in joy. The triumph of a benevolent zeal is complete. Prejudice is vanquished; and foes by nation and religion become friends and brethren in Christ.

What false Messiah among the Jews ever acted as Christ did? Whence his clearer light, his better feeling, and his sufficient motive to indulge that feeling and act up to that light? "Unless this man were of God, he could do nothing" of this kind, is not more true of his miracles than of his morals. Divine power is requisite to explain the one, and divine illumination not less so to explain the other.

They alike show that the Father dwelt in him, and sent him to be the Saviour of the world.

Yet was the prejudice from which he was free a gross and wicked one. It was common; and that made even good men among the Jews perceive neither its grossness nor its wickedness. Let us learn to scrutinise our own convictions and feelings. Error in both may lurk where it is least suspected. To cleanse our own opinions from falsehood, our hearts from malignity, and our actions from vice, is our first concern. If we aspire to the honourable task of aiding in the reformation of others, here should the work of reformation begin, here our strength be tried in the kind of labour it imposes, here our anticipations be corrected as to the measure and rapidity of success. It is a needful preparation, and without it no one should engage as a labourer in that field, or expect a title to rejoice in that harvest of usefulness. Or if no such views are cherished in the mind,—if we leave bettering the world to more eager minds and more active hands,—yet should we beware of impeding what we refrain from aiding, and, by our own contentedness in what may be wrong, presenting heavy though passive obstacles to the progress of truth and goodness. If we wait to have our suspicions excited by others that the tenets we hold are erroneous, before we proceed to their investigation; if we wait to have our consciences aroused by some external agency, before we subject our hearts and lives to a closer application of the great test of morality,—the least that can be done is to act when such occasions come; and, if we will leave so interesting a work to others in its commencement, not to augment the difficulty, or offer a resistance by which ourselves must be the greatest sufferers. The slothful servant is worse than the diligent one; but the obstinately wrong is yet worse than the slothful. Glaring, indeed, is such folly, when the work is only that of achieving his own good, and the reward is his own salvation.

Let us learn also the productiveness of benevolent efforts, though it may appear but slowly, and after a long interval. The joy of Samaria, when the apostles preached, was the reward of the solitary endeavours of Jesus years before. They gathered the harvest of which he buried the seed in the ground. Prompt success, in exertions to benefit mankind, is a stimulus of which we should as much as

possible feel ourselves independent. It is enough for us to witness the effects of toil of those who went before us. "Other men laboured, and we have entered into their labours." Why should not a coming generation enter into ours? In the path of duty and usefulness, we walk by faith in Him with whom "one day is as a thousand years." Yet his Providence often gives ample indications that our labour is "not in vain in the Lord." Most cheering are the present indications, as most glorious will be the ultimate proof, that whenever we strive for the promotion of truth and goodness, "stronger is He that is for us than they that are against us." His almighty arm will, in due time, achieve the final victory over human ignorance and error, vice and misery.

Sermon XVI.—Christ's Apology for the Gentiles.

"And about the eleventh hour he went out, and found others standing idle, and saith unto them, Why stand ye here all the day idle? They say unto him, Because no man hath hired us" (Matt. xx. 6, 7).

The whole parable is as follows:

"For the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which went out early in the morning to hire labourers into his vineyard. And when he had agreed with the labourers for a penny a day, he sent them into his vineyard. And he went out about the third hour, and saw others standing idle in the market-place, and said unto them, Go ye also into the vineyard, and whatsoever is right I will give you. And they went their way. Again he went out about the sixth and ninth hour, and did likewise. And about the eleventh hour he went out, and found others standing idle, and saith unto them, Why stand ye here all the day idle? They say unto him, Because no man hath hired us. He saith unto them, Go ye also into the vineyard; and whatsoever is right, that shall ye receive. So when even was come, the lord of the vineyard saith unto his steward, Call the labourers, and give them their hire, beginning from the last unto the first. And when they came that were hired about the eleventh hour, they received every man a penny. But when the first came, they supposed that they should have received more; and they

likewise received every man a penny. And when they had received it, they murmured against the good man of the house, saying, These last have wrought but one hour, and thou hast made them equal unto us, which have borne the burden and heat of the day. But he answered one of them, and said, Friend, I do thee no wrong: didst not thou agree with me for a penny? Take that thine is, and go thy way: I will give unto this last, even as unto thee. Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? Is thine eye evil, because I am good? So the last shall be first, and the first last: for many be called, but few chosen."

This parable primarily referred to that subject which was the burden of almost all our Lord's parables,—the calling of the Gentiles, and their incorporation with the Jews, on equal terms, in the kingdom of heaven. It is by the long preparation, the strenuous efforts, and, at last, by the murmuring submission of even the converted Jews, that we now learn the strength of the prejudice by which this incorporation was resisted. Elevated by the possession of privilege and the assumption of merit, they could not bear the idea that the stray sheep in the wilderness should be brought back into the fold and cherished there, as those which had never strayed; that the Gentile prodigal, who had wasted his spiritual substance with riotous living in the far country of idolatry, should be welcomed back with joy and mercy to the paternal mansion; that the nations which had been idle for centuries, in the labour of cultivating religious truth and worship, should, in the latter days, come in and possess that which had been deemed the peculiar recompense, almost the property, of the toilsome and persecuted children of Abraham, who had been called in the very morning of the world's history. Their eye was evil, because God was good. They grudged his grace, and would have monopolised his blessing. The argument of our Lord in this parable against their prejudice is twofold: first, that religious privileges are God's gift,—that, if some have more, none can pretend to have less than they could claim on a principle of justice; and therefore, none being injured, none can question the free exercise of grace and mercy. The benevolent would rejoice in it; the most selfish ought not to complain. And secondly, that the Gentiles should rather be regarded as having been inferior in privilege than

in merit to the Jews. They had not laboured in religion's vineyard, because not called. Their idleness was not so much a voluntary choice as an unfortunate condition, from which no helper had yet appeared for their deliverance. They stood idle in the market-place, for no man had hired them. There were the ability, the disposition, the desire even, to labour; but till the eleventh hour it was not called forth. When it was, they even surpassed the inheritors of ancient privileges,—the last became first, and the first last; and though *many* of the Jews *were called* to the kingdom of heaven, *few* of them, in comparison with the Gentiles to whom the gospel was preached, showed such alacrity at the invitation, that they *were chosen* to be the possessors of its blessings and the agents of its power.

Now it is on this last consideration that I purpose to dwell; and as it was valid for our Lord's purpose of showing that there was no injustice to the Jews in the calling of the Gentiles to equal privileges, it is also a fact of human nature, of which—now that all question about that admission has ceased for ages—we may yet make various other uses conducive to our own improvement. It is ever true that there is in human nature an intellectual and moral capability, of undefined extent, which may be latent for any period; but which, whenever the appropriate stimulus is applied, manifests its existence, starts into exercise, and produces results which fill us with admiration. To say that man is ignorant, barbarous, narrow-minded, grovelling, selfish, vicious, is only to say that he is yet idle in the market-place, waiting for the master to hire him,—waiting for the call of Providence in that peculiar and appropriate combination of events which will excite him to the realisation of knowledge, refinement, piety, and benevolence.

The illustration of this fact, in what belongs to intellectual talent and the arts, may be seen abundantly in different countries and ages.

Ancient Greece! That combination of words designates a combination of circumstances for developing to an unparalleled degree men's capacity,—in the few to produce, in the many to appreciate, the noblest productions of the chisel. Why have their architecture and sculpture been never, in any country, rivalled? Because, though not every particular, yet the aggregate, was peculiar to their

fine climate; their romantic and picturesque country; the affinity of their first rude huts with the finest architectural forms and proportions; the abundance of the most beautiful material to which those forms could be transferred; the eminently poetical character of their mythology; their public manners and democratic institutions; the honour in which talent and art were held when ministering to the common enjoyment; the glory of rearing buildings and carving statues, of which this should be a temple and that a deity; the emulation of individuals in the adornment of a city; and the rivalry of cities and states, each large enough for the inhabitants to combine with effect, and small enough to give the motive its full force on each individual mind: these, operating merely on the capacities and talents which belong every where and always to human nature, made Athens the marble paradise of earth; filling it with gods, and the abodes of gods, whose forms of stone seemed instinct with the taste and genius which gave them being; and gained such a perfection of symmetry and beauty as almost to require for posterity the certifying testimony of authentic history that these indeed were man's creation. Let the revolutions of time and circumstance only place man again under the like influences, and there is that in him, in his nature and constitution, which will give birth to a new world of art, full of majesty and loveliness, and peopled by forms which angels might not disdain to wear.

So of the great era of painting, which I take to have been in the Italian school about the time of the Reformation. It would be very absurd to suppose that, at that particular period, a certain number of persons were born with physical or mental capabilities for the arts of design and colouring, such as are not common in an equal number in every generation. The difference was without, not within. It was in that freedom of spirit which elsewhere took the direction of theological discussion; in revived attention to those of the great works of ancient art which were known, and the discovery of many more; in the adoption, by the Romish church, of a more refined and tasteful splendour to sustain its rudely shaken influence; and in the knowledge that such works, if worthy, would be glorified like those of Greece—would have their conspicuous stations in Chris-

tian churches, held up there to the public gaze, to the public reverence; would command fame for their author and worship for themselves, and remain the visible personations of whatever is awful and lovely in the common notion of the creation and redemption of humankind.

And thus also, in the golden age of English literature, —the age of Hooker, Chillingworth, Taylor, South, and Barrow; of Jonson, Beaumont, Fletcher, and Massinger; of Spenser, Shakespeare, and Milton; the age from Bacon to Locke,—was there not a constellation of congregated influences beaming on our country?—the excitement of theological conflict—the new doctrines of the Reformation battling with those of the old hierarchy; the excitement of philosophical conflict—experiment and analysis striving with theory, Aristotle, and the schoolmen; the excitement of political conflict—kings' claims and people's rights dashed in collision with the shock of an earthquake? And were not the treasures of classical literature thrown open to the not passively admiring gaze? And were not the scriptures sent abroad in the land, with their intellectual as well as their moral power, their simple history, their gorgeous orientalism, their varied poetry, their profound philosophy, and the heart-touching parables of Christ? Here is the secret of that magnificent blaze of mind, and not in any preternatural emission or unwonted creation of genius.

The French revolution (the first, as we must now call it; blessed be Providence on humanity's behalf!) offers a conspicuous instance in which the extraordinary demand was immediately answered by the unlimited supply of a particular species of talent—I mean military skill. A great general had been thought a rare character; but in the sudden throwing open of the highest military rank to the lowest in birth or station; in the boundless career at once presented to the personal enterprise and ambition of any one; in the national character of the army and the cause, and the national enthusiasm which made this the favourite direction for its explosion; in the necessary demolition of old rules, and forms, and principles, and etiquette, and all that could embarrass the free development of talent; and in the mighty array and fierce threats of a hostile world, which, failing to dismay, could only be a burning stimulus: in these, acting upon ordinary human nature, was heard

the voice which called forth such a band of warlike leaders as never before defied failure, and "organised victory," and menaced that subjugation of mankind, which would have been accomplished, had there not been far more powerful things on earth than military talent.

There is, then, in human nature a latent fund of intellectual ability, which merely requires the application of the appropriate external stimulus to call it forth. The different kinds of talent we have adverted to—and in pursuing this topic, I might long occupy your time by the mere enumeration of other classes and instances—have always existed, do always exist; and if, like the labourers in the parable, they stand idle in the market-place all day, it is because the master has not hired them, and set them to work; because the combinations of human wisdom, or rather the dispensations of Divine Providence, have not produced those situations, those arrangements of circumstances, by which their existence is manifested, and their vigour elicited. They still are in man. Now, it is thus also in morals. And to this purpose our Lord's assertion is more direct. The great Lord of the moral vineyard could have made the Gentiles active labourers in it at as early a period as the Jews, had he so pleased. He needed not their services. The ultimate benefit of mankind by revelation was best obtained by the previous call of Abraham and his posterity. It was not their superior merit or capacity which gave them this preference; it was the decision of Infinite Wisdom and Impartial Love, acting by them for the final good and blessing of the whole of humankind. But to give now some illustrations in morals.

I have already directed your minds to a very striking one—the Jews. For centuries upon centuries, for between two and three thousand years, the Jews, as a nation, have steadily adhered to that first great practical principle of rational religion, the worship of one only God. They were trained to this by their law, by the administration of that law, by their captivities; and the discipline did its work. So far as that point goes, and considering the singular circumstances of their history, with all which they involve of suffering, temptation, and depression, their constancy is unparalleled. Man, then, any man, may know, and restrict his service to, the Lord his Maker. There are moral facul-

ties in our nature as well as intellectual. Piety may be extracted from the human constitution as well as the arts of peace or war, the sciences of production or of destruction. Let God, in the voice of providential events, say to his rational children, "Know me;" and all *shall* know him, from the least to the greatest.

I would next point to the patriotism of the republics of antiquity, Rome and Greece. Some will dispute the excellence of this quality—some will denounce it as vicious; none, I imagine, will compare it with the pure and universal philanthropy of the gospel: but surely, if it were only an extension of the selfish principle, it is something to embrace a whole community in that principle—to be identified with all the members of a state, and ready for their good to make that sacrifice which earthly selfishness cannot make, the sacrifice of life itself. Even this was done in countless instances. They did not live unto themselves. And if it was not for the world that they lived, yet it was for their country. And how was this? Because that country, which they loved so well, was so limited as to be within the grasp of the affections and imagination; because they had really a common interest; because each had his share in its legislation, government, and glory; because to each the good opinion of almost every other was essential; and in such a stage and constitution of society, even self-love must merge into love of country. Man is naturally a patriot, when institutions will but let him. Whether such a state is best and happiest is another question, into which I enter not. I only want the illustration of his moral capability.

For an unexceptionable case of benevolence, take that of the Christians of Judea, as manifested in the community of goods which obtained among them. It is probable, I think, that this never extended to the Gentile converts, and that it lasted with Jewish believers till the desolation of their country; perhaps after, while they remained a distinct body. There was no divine command for it. Nor have we any reason to suppose a mental miracle wrought for its accomplishment. It is only an exhibition of humanity in extraordinary circumstances. But what an exhibition! There came the rich, with the produce of his property; and there the poor, with the wages of his labour. Unequal in amount, but equally sanctified by the principle,

their goods flowed into the common stock, to return to each in the proportion of his necessities. It was a kingdom of heaven, in which earth's inequalities were rectified. As with the manna in the wilderness, there were none that hoarded, and none that lacked. "Breaking bread from house to house, they did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God, and having favour with all the people." And all the people who, in successive centuries, have looked back to that golden age of the gospel,—to whom the efforts of the primitive Christians have been the theme of moral exhortation, and the burden of many a holy hymn, and a sort of vision of perfection to be dwelt upon with delight, but not within the scope of emulation,—had, and have, an equal basis in their human constitution for such a sacred edifice of benevolence. The germs of sympathy and generosity are in human nature. The "brethren at Jerusalem" were "men of like passions" with ourselves. It was but situation: the first fresh conviction that the desire of all nations was come; the rapid brightening of Christian truth upon the mind; the union into which they were compressed by the violence of external persecution; the deadness thus produced to the world, and the things of the world; the unearthly elevation of feeling, hope, and prospect, to which they were suddenly raised,—these were the stimulants, operating on the common heart of man, which made these Christians so love one another.

For the firmness, founded on religious principle, of which humanity is capable, look at the Christians of a somewhat later period, in the age of heathen persecution and martyrdom. Then the rich resigned life, without any longing after the continued enjoyment of the luxuries which wealth might have purchased. Then the poor man, the slave, to whom his life was all he had, willingly laid down that all in the cause of Christ. Then infirm old age tottered to the scaffold, its enfeebled mind scorning the feebleness of purchasing a few more years of life by apostasy. Then manhood in its full vigour, and youth in its spring of expectancy, shunned not the premature stroke that cut them off from the long life that nature promised. The timid woman did not shrink from torture. The low-minded barbarian did not purchase his life by falsehood to his God. Both sexes, all ages, all ranks, almost all nations—to all, Christian

martyrdom extended—disdaining subterfuge and braving torment, displayed a moral heroism that to the heathen philosopher was a mystery. He knew much of man, but not of the peculiar influences to which these men had been subjected, whose religion was a faith confirmed by miracles, whose hope was the hope of immortality, and whose consistency was the condition of an eternal crown of celestial bliss and glory. These were the Gentiles, to whose privileges the Jews objected that themselves had borne the heat and burden of the day, little foreseeing the heat and burden of that coming day through which *they* should toil and bleed.

I have taken large classes of men rather than individual instances, because they cannot be so plausibly resolved into peculiarities of constitution. They show the resources, the capabilities, not of favoured individuals, but of human nature. I have only illustrated the fact; to which I shall again advert, on account of the moral influences in which it is so abundantly rich. For it is a fact which teaches us to look forward to a future state, where these capabilities shall have their free and full development, which here is impossible. It is a fact which bids us reverence human nature, which makes us see in the meanest or vilest individual, not only what he is, but what he may be, and was meant to be. It elevates our notions of the wisdom and power of God, who can produce a moral as well as a material world out of seeming nothingness or confusion, calling things which are not as though they were, because all are of him. It illustrates the impartiality of his love, which, as it has identified our nature, will identify our final destiny. It is a warning against hasty judgment and censorious thoughts, and no less a stimulus to all that is holy, beneficent, and praiseworthy. It proclaims the deep responsibility of those who can influence the forming circumstances under which the characters of others are placed, and guides us to making that influence "the savour of life unto life, and not of death unto death." And most impressive are its lessons of piety, charity, and humility. By the blessing of God, may good be derived from it to our hearts and lives! Amen.

Sermon XVII.—The same Subject continued.

"And about the eleventh hour he went out, and found others standing idle, and saith unto them, Why stand ye here all the day idle? They say unto him, Because no man hath hired us" (Matt. xx. 6, 7).

In discoursing from these words, taken in connection with the whole of the parable to which they belong, I endeavoured to show, that the immediate object of the parable was to soften down Jewish prejudice as opposed to the calling of the Gentiles on equal terms to the enjoyment of religious privileges; that the particular way in which Christ aimed, in the parable before us, to effect this, was by representing the Gentiles as having fallen short of the Jews, not so much in merit and disposition, as in external circumstances,—they stood idle because they had not been hired and sent into the vineyard: that while this was in itself true, and very pertinent to his purpose, it was not merely a partial, but a general truth—a fact of human nature, which, now that the immediate discussion to which he applied it has become matter of Christian antiquity, has yet a variety of practical bearings, in which we and all mankind are interested; that, thus generalised, the proposition is, that there is in human nature an intellectual and moral capability, of undefined extent, which may be latent for any period, but which, whenever the appropriate stimulus is applied, manifests its existence, starts into exercise, and produces results which fill us with admiration: that this capability has been evinced by the extraordinary display, in large bodies of men, at different times and in different countries, of mental talent or moral disposition: that, as instances of the former, may be given the perfection of the arts of sculpture and architecture in ancient Greece; that of painting in Italy during the middle ages; the literature of England in the reign of Elizabeth and the half-century which followed; and the burst of military talent among men of all ranks and stations, in the French revolution; and, for moral instances, the adherence of the Jews to the Divine Unity; the patriotism of the small republics of antiquity; the mutual benevolence and love of the Christians of Judea, as especially evinced in their community of goods; and the firmness of the glorious army of Christian

martyrs during the ages of heathen persecution: and that in these and similar cases, we have only the development, under the influence of external circumstances, of capabilities which belong not merely to those classes of men, but to the human nature and constitution; remaining in it, however latent, and only waiting the command of the great Master to show themselves, and to do their appropriate work in the plan of Providence.

We have now to advert to some practical bearings of this fact.

1. It teaches us to reverence human nature. I hold this inference to be a very important one. No man can with impunity despise humanity. To do so is hostile, if not fatal, both to the personal and social virtues. It lays the axe to the root of whatever is most elevated and generous in feeling, and most useful in action; depraving prudence into trickery, and sneering at disinterestedness as romantic. One of the worst features of corrupt religion is its debased and debasing exhibition of human nature. One of the brightest glories of Christianity is the display of the full moral and devotional capabilites of humanity in the example of Jesus Christ, who, while he was the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person, was at the same time only the first-born among his "many brethren" of the human race. Reverence thyself, comes only next to, Know thyself, in the steps of discipline by which man ascends in improvement towards perfection. It is looking abroad on the capabilities of our nature by which this must be effected. The inordinate estimate of personal qualities and attainments is a very different thing, and as absurd as this is rational; as pernicious as this is useful. The more man reverences his nature, the more humbling must be his sense of personal failings and deficiencies. He stands abashed in the consciousness of how little he has done at best; how much his intrusted talents have been misdirected, how much neglected, how much abused. He realises the most powerful restraint upon self-complacency, the most powerful stimulus to honourable industry. He elevates the mark at which he aims from what has been done to what may be done; and if he do not reach perfection, he is certainly the nearer for keeping it constantly in his view. It is true, man exists under

many forms which seem little adapted to inspire reverence —the poor helpless infant, the wild savage, the ignorant rustic, the depraved criminal. But there is our nature still—our nature, with its capabilities, even in these; and such as some of these, nationally if not individually, were once the very beings whom we have exhibited as illustrations of these capabilities; such were those polished and patriotic Greeks; those Jews, upholders of pure monotheism in defiance of a world's idolatry; those Christians, so exalted in the purity of their manners, the benevolence of their hearts, the firmness of their martyrdom. Yes, of the same material, of such stuff as these despised ones, are made the profoundest philosophers, the purest philanthropists, the brightest specimens of man, the holiest worshipers of God. It is in the emotions excited by the highest of our race that we should learn how to regard the lowest; for that exaltation is in their capacity now,—we trust in their destiny hereafter. It is of the whole human race that the Psalmist speaks, as, his feelings influenced by the one portion, he says, "Lord, what is man that thou art mindful of him, and the son of man that thou visitest him?" and, referring to the other, whose qualities are equally essential, he continues, "Thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and crowned him with glory and honour." And this is the nature which it is our charge not to degrade in our own persons; not to enervate by indolence, to harden by selfishness, to sully by crime. "Son of man," there is no hereditary nobility to be compared with thine; none so fraught with dignity, so mighty in motive, so glorious in prospect; none, the deep sense of which so well directs and purifies and elevates. He who best sustains the transmitted honour of peerage or of crown does but little compared with him who acts up to his nature in its Maker's design and destination, and does that, and that only, which "may become a man."

2. It suggests a strong argument for a future state of being.

What should we say of some splendid contrivance in machinery, resting on a basis which could only support it for a very limited period, and planted in a situation where it could not go through the hundredth part of the useful operations of which it was capable? What but that the

maker, whose skill was evident by the perfection of its construction, must have intended it, after its assigned work there was done, for removal to some firmer basis and sphere of wider operation, where it could stand firm enough, and long enough, and work freely enough, to bring its full powers into exercise, and realise all their useful results? The inference would, I think, be a valid one. It is precisely that which we draw from the comparison of man's capacities with his circumstances. *He* must be intended for removal to some sphere where his capacities will have ampler development, longer duration, and wider scope for exercise, and greater results. How much would the argument be strengthened, if this supposed machine could be conscious of its nature and position; if it *felt* how elastic were its springs, and how firm its levers, and how ponderous its weights, and how well adjusted its component parts, and how fine the texture of some, and how massive the substance of others, and how mighty the aggregate force of the whole, and yet how little of that force was called into action in its present position, and how much might be done, and how nobly its force might be evolved, if moved elsewhere; and if its consciousness became a wish, and that wish a hope, and if there were a thousand symptoms which convinced it that such was its Maker's design,—appearances which, with his previous knowledge that it would so interpret them, and seeing that it actually did,—he yet allowed it to construe as his implied promise of removal to a worthier sphere of action! Would not this imagined case, which is not an imaginary case, but the condition of man upon the earth, be—it is—a moral proof of that other state? There only can the human machine be firmly planted, and enduringly. There only can the great majority of its powers, here latent and dormant, be put into operation. There only can the personal and social results to which the human constitution tends, and for which it was framed, be in reality produced. There only can its own natural, universal, yea, we may call it instinctive desire, and its Maker's implied promise, have their full and felicitous accomplishment. And, therefore, there only, and not in the dust of annihilation, can be man's final destiny. The promise which beams upon the gospel page was first written upon the human heart. The glory of redemption had its

dawn in the very first light of creation; and the Divine Spirit which animated Adam's yet unbreathing dust gave the same precious pledge of life and immortality as that which was afterwards renewed, confirmed, and illustrated, in the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

3. This fact, that the influence of peculiar circumstances has elicited both mental and moral capacities in man, which at other times have remained latent, involves a serious admonition as to our responsibility in influencing others, and in regulating our own minds and lives.

We have given several striking instances of intellectual and moral superiority exhibited at different times by large bodies of men, and which prove the capability of man at all times, though it may not be called forth by the appropriate external stimulus. Now, to a certain extent the circumstances which form this stimulus are altogether out of man's reach, individually or collectively. They belong either to peculiarities of climate, which we cannot control; or to a certain stage in the progress of society, which we cannot recall; or to events whose recurrence we cannot command. No power on earth could place any man, or set of men, in the exact position, as to external influences on the formation of character, of the Jew, the ancient Greek, the early Christian, or any other of those to whose powers or achievements we have adverted. All that we can do with this class is, to derive from it general lessons to apply to the peculiar state of things in which we ourselves exist.

There is a second class of circumstances which are within men's reach, collectively considered, but only considered collectively; I mean what relates to institution, to legislation, to the administration of justice, to the object and tendency of punishment, to the recognition, theoretically and practically, of political right, to establishments of public education and public charity. And these are mighty to exalt or to degrade character. Their influence pervades all the ranks of social life. They affect the rate at which knowledge advances, and the extent to which it is diffused. They make millions independent or servile, generous or base. They are a master who hires man's best faculties for noblest works of usefulness, or neglects or dreads them, keeping them in idleness, because he trembles at their power. These may seem the work of a few; they are so

as to direct establishment, abrogation, or improvement; but in such a country as ours there is a higher power, that of Public Opinion, in which every one has his share. There is no enlightened man but has a "voice potential" in such matters; and he is a traitor to human nature, unless he give it for those principles, institutions, and measures which tend most extensively to unfold the capacities of that nature for intellectual and moral greatness. Shortsighted is that philanthropy which, intent on cases of individual distress, heeds not the public acts which wither souls by millions, or by millions raise them in the scale of social existence! If the practice of oppression corrupts some, and its endurance demoralises others; if punishments shock, instead of harmonising with, the common feeling and sense of justice; if in any thing man's progress is retarded, or if by any thing that progress can be promoted,—it is not for the Christian to be quiescent, even if he can do no more than speak his serious conviction. That is demanded of him for his brethren, and, because it is for his brethren, by his God.

Further: a third class of these circumstances may be influenced by individual control. Parents and masters in their houses, teachers in their seminaries, councils, senates, professors in their universities, not only give the formal instruction of precept, but are responsible for the more powerful instruction and stimulus of those circumstances which are of their arrangement or allowance. "Tell truth," say the ethics of the proudest institutions in the land, in whose college-halls its noblest youth are congregated; to which youth their statutes also say, "Subscribe creeds which you cannot have examined, and swear to the observance of regulations which have become obsolete, impracticable, and ridiculous." Is this calling veracity into the vineyard of moral cultivation in the morning of life? Is it not rather turning it out, bidding it stand idle all the day, unless some mightier voice should summon it to its task at the ninth or the eleventh hour? Oh, how much of what is called education is the mere stuffing of children's memories with what may or may not be worth recollecting, but which leaves their understandings and hearts idle! Lead them to think soundly; lead them to feel rightly and warmly. That is education, and all else is pedantry and quackery. But how? Evidently by teacher or parent

humbly imitating the plan of the almighty and wise Father of mankind, as we have been tracing it in the results of events on the human constitution. How taught he the Jews? He freed them from Egypt, overwhelmed the tyrant, and established them in the promised land. Hence they deduced the resistlessness of his power. The supernatural circumstances were his, the rational inference was theirs; and the doctrine of his omnipotence was a thousand times better taught and learned than it could have been by its revelation in an abstract proposition, which they might have repeated for ages without comprehending its import. Excite the intellect by presenting objects of interest; strengthen and exercise it, and merely watch over for guidance, instead of superseding its own operations and deductions. Children will then grow up thinking beings, and beings of independent thought. They will have no false shame at virtuous sentiments or emotions of human feeling. Apply these truths to yourselves. Surround not yourselves with associations, place not yourselves in situations, which leave your mind stagnant and your heart unimproved. Mix not habitually with inferiors in mind and character; be at least as often a learner as a teacher; the benefited as the benefactor of your circle of society. Seek out what inspires you with devotional feeling: be it the animated worship of the congregated multitude; the reading of the scriptures and of works imbued with their spirit; the solitary ramble, where man may yet have left so much of nature as may speak to your heart of nature's God. Shun not the scenes which make you conscious of your fellows' sufferings, of their wants and woes; crush not the throbbings of sympathy; the feeling and the aid which stop the progress of disease in their bodies may stop the progress of selfishness in your heart; what nourishes their frames may also nourish your benevolence; what restores them to honest labour may prevent your moral principle from standing idle all the day of life, and hire you for that work of philanthropy which, whatever the heat and burden it endures, has a noble recompense in the bosom here, the earnest of an infinitely blessed one in heaven hereafter.

4. From man let us, in conclusion, look up to God. His work is this constitution whose capabilities are so wonderful; of his disposal are these circumstances which so

develop them; his the universal care and love which work in all and by all; calling his agents from afar, from the ends of the earth; speaking of things which are not, things of remote futurity, as though they were; and in all the mighty combination preparing for himself the revelation of the glory of his paternal character, and for us the full felicity and dignity of his children. If now he pours out in abundance the influences which rouse man's mind to its noblest efforts, and anon, restraining his hand, seems to forget to be gracious, and leaves the nations to grope in darkness; if here he call with a resistless voice to labours which bear the stamp of godlike benevolence, and then leave the souls of men to be the (temporary) prey of passions, let loose like wild beasts, and roaming in terror and for destruction; if for a moment we almost shrink from gazing fixedly on the scene, lest it bewilder our reason and rob our hearts of their filial faith,—let us check the wretched weakness, and think again that we know enough of God, of his boundless wisdom and his boundless power and his boundless love, to enable us to walk by faith where sight fails us, and to rest assured that there would be no seeming deviations in the course of his Providence, were they not essential to his plan. We have seen how high he can raise the individual, how high he can raise large masses of men, even here. They are so many pledges of his future bounty to the human race. Let us, then, delight in the contemplation of his magnificence. All things were created for his pleasure; and his pleasure in man is the enlargement of his mind, the elevation of his character, the final perfection of his happiness.

Sermon XVIII.

The Glory of God in the Face of Christ.

"For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Cor. iv. 6).

What a splendid and awful commission was that which Christ received of the Father! How vast in the extent, and how stupendous in the magnitude, of its objects; how original in its means; how wonderful in the combinations of

its progress; how varied and lovely in its present consequences; and how supremely felicitous in its final results, when every enemy of truth, goodness, and joy shall be destroyed, and God be all in all to the rational universe of his creation and redemption! Here are topics which, considered in their aggregate as one great whole, might well overwhelm the mind; which, viewed in their variety and boundlessness, open fields of religious inquiry and devout meditation, wherein the soul might occupy itself for ages, and still find how much was left for it to explore and rejoice in; and of which each one, regarded separately and distinctly, seems to swell into a theme of all-surpassing interest and moment, deserving and repaying exclusive attention, tasking the strongest faculties of the inquiring intellect, and exciting the warmest emotions of the devout heart.

That particular design, for instance, of Christ's mission, which the apostle has here adverted to—what a sublimity there is in it! He speaks of him as sent, among other purposes, for this—that he might display to human gaze, not only in his teaching, but in his dispositions and conduct, the moral character of the Deity, its grandeur and its loveliness. *His* purity and mercy, condescension and benevolence, were exhibited to the world that they might, through this medium, learn the purity and mercy, the condescension and benevolence, of the invisible God. His goodness beamed on the moral night of men's conceptions like the first rays of heaven's light on the yet shapeless earth, harbingering the reduction of its chaotic elements to beauty and order. It was a celestial ray which penetrated and pervaded the feelings in reaching the understanding which it was to illumine with just notions of the Divine character. "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." In this moral sense it is, not by a common nature, that Christ and God are one; and that he could truly say, "Whoso hath seen me hath seen the Father also." By this he was "the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person."

The great advantages of this mode of revealing God to man are, that it is both definite and affecting. Definite, for the exhibition of a perfect man, one in whom the Deity

had full complacency; his "beloved Son, in whom he was well pleased,"—whose moral qualities were pure and ample emanations from his own,—must needs give us a more correct notion of his attributes than the abstract language of philosophical truth, or than the plainest indications of their author which exist in the material universe. Affecting, for we behold those moral qualities embodied in one of our own nature—the word made flesh; and in full, constant, and varied exercise towards our fellow-creatures, in all the wants, wanderings, and wretchedness of their mental, moral, or physical condition. The evil has been, that while the fact could not but be perceived, the application has too often not been made. Men have seen what Christ was; but instead of thence learning what God is, they have set about constructing from very different, and from base materials, a theory of the Divine character. There has been, there could be, comparatively little mistake about what Christ was. I speak not of his metaphysical nature, but of his moral qualities. All Christians have seen in his character the pattern of perfection: they were right. All Christians have felt it draw towards him the affections of their hearts; all love Christ: they are right in that too. And then they have generally represented the Deity with most unlike qualities and attributes: and in that they have gone wrong; the more wrong, the further they have departed from this rule. And this is the fundamental error of the prevalent systems of religion; the basis of the worst corruptions of the gospel. If, instead of speculating on the divinity of Christ's nature, they would but reason consistently on the reflected divinity of his character, how speedily would our theological differences be brought to a close, and all minds and hearts be irradiated by "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ"!

Had men always thus studied the Deity, who, under the Christian dispensation, would ever have thought of placating or pleasing him by the tinsel pomps of a ceremonial worship? What is there in the history of Christ to intimate that he would have been moved or gratified by the approach of a procession of cowled and robed monks, "black, white, and gray, with all their trumpery;" he to whom the adulation of words was an abhorrence; who was the simplicity which he loved in others; and who, in the vision of temptation,

turned away, without a second or a lingering glance, from all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them? Or who, had men thus studied the Deity, would ever have dared, in his name, to draw the sword and unfurl the banner of war; to rivet the fetter or kindle the flame of persecution? For is it not prominent in the sacred record, that when one apostle drew his weapon, Jesus said, "Put up thy sword; all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword:" and when another proposed calling down fire from heaven upon the Samaritans, he said, "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of: for the Son of Man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them"? Here should men have learned the lesson, that the God of Christ and of Christians is to be honoured by the simplicity of the heart's adoration, and served in the spirit of peace, forbearance, and brotherly affection.

Theologians say that the very infant comes into the world under the wrath and curse of the Deity. They never learned that by observing the glory of God in the face of Christ. No such withering frown ever sat on his benignant countenance. Think of Christ wroth with a child! Think of Christ cursing a child! I must read in the gospel that he did so before I believe that God does so, and that the Calvinistic doctrine of original sin is true. In the strong horror of the human heart at the monstrous combination of such a person with such an action, I read the condemnation of that gloomiest article of a gloomy creed; and if it be a foul calumny on Christ, it must, exalted as he was, be a yet fouler calumny on God. I would sooner believe the one than the other. I would sooner imagine Jesus of Nazareth encountering some fond father and fonder mother, in the first freshness of their parental feelings, as they pass beneath "the gate of the temple which was called Beautiful,"—less beautiful in the sculptured forms of marble on which its gorgeous architecture rested, than in the living human group which were there bearing the babe to the altar to dedicate it to the God of its fathers,—and encountering them with that solemn malediction which would sink into their souls and corrode their lives, than I would imagine the Omniscience which witnesses each man's birth, life, and death, to be in all earth's scenes of parental anxiousness and fondness over helpless infancy, the all-pervading presence of

an almighty curse. Yet this is the doctrine into which thousands upon thousands of children are catechised. Why will not parents and teachers lead them, not to Calvin, but to Christ? So should they receive a blessing, even as did those children which were led to him, notwithstanding that there were not wanting, even then, erring disciples to intercept their approach and forbid their coming. As his blessing was on them, so is that of his and our God. His doctrine illustrates his conduct. "Their angels," he says, "do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven;" they are peculiar objects of the providential care which, by the number, swiftness, and power of those supposed winged messengers, was so pictorially typified; and again, "Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me; for of such is the kingdom of heaven."

Theologians say that God avenged the honour of his broken laws, and satisfied the claims of his justice, and made a needful opening for the exercise of his mercy to the repentant sinner, by imputing the sins of mankind to Christ, and visiting their punishment on his head. They never learned that, either, by observing the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. His heart and life neither exhibited nor recognised any such moral principle as this sort of vindictive justice. It was not thus that he dealt with those who offended against him. Nothing could be so prompt, rich, and free as his forgiveness, unless that of God, as he taught, and we believe it to be exercised, in the parable of the Prodigal Son. Had the principle ascribed by this faith to God been that of Christ, how would he have acted, for instance, when Peter denied him? Think of the enormous discrepancy which his then adopting it would have introduced into the gospel. Suppose him forgiving Peter, notwithstanding those tears of bitterness and that subsequent life of devotion to his cause, only on condition that John, the beloved disciple, should, in his own mind and body, endure some penalty of heavy anguish, the outpouring of the vials of Jesus' wrath for the apostasy of Peter, imputed to him: would this have strengthened the precept to love Christ? Would this have been a scene for us to admire and venerate? Yet, if God be the God of vindictive justice, thus should his glory have shone in the face of Jesus Christ. It was a purer light

that beamed from his eye when, in the midst of his false asseverations, "the Lord turned and looked upon Peter." That glance of affectionate upbraiding, of reproachful tenderness, of frank forgiveness, shone into his heart, as it does still into ours: "that is the true light." When the yet unconverted Paul was rushing on in his career, it is true the glorified appearance of Jesus struck him to the earth; but it was no blow of vengeance. Though he had aided in the infliction of death on Christians, there was no demand of blood for blood—his own or that of a substitute; it was the blaze of mercy which blinded his eyes to irradiate his mind; it was the voice of godlike compassion which said, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" And then, with godlike generosity, came his apostolic commission and his Master's promise. Now I say that if we are to see, as this same Paul tells us in the text, "the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ,"—if the moral character of Jesus be really a picturing forth to the world of the moral attributes of the Deity,—then the common doctrines of atonement and satisfaction are utterly inconsistent with that character and those attributes, and have nothing to do with that eternal life which is in the knowledge of the Father, the only God, and Jesus Christ whom he sent.

I shall make one other contrast of this kind. It is said that God punishes the wicked vindictively and eternally; that their sinfulness and their wretchedness shall alike be endless. In this it is implied that God does not wish for their reformation, for then he would certainly accomplish it. It must be in his power to order and overrule their punishment to their correction. And it also supposes God to put forth his power for perpetuating these sinful and suffering existences; for there is no natural immortality but that of God. Eternal existence, independent on the will of God, is an assertion without evidence and without reasonableness. Now, then, I ask, whether there was any set of sinners, however hardened, for whose reformation Christ did not wish? I ask, whether he ever wrought a miracle to prolong the existence of sin and suffering? whether his miracles were not uniformly beneficent, and the one great object of his heart the salvation of all? In all his ceaseless efforts for the lost sheep of the house of

Israel, he forgot not the Gentiles, justly described, not only as to locality, but as to feeling, as "those who were afar off." The trampled-down publican was raised by his gentle hand. He sojourned, teaching, in the remote provinces; and he wept over the devoted towers of Jerusalem. Suppose a professedly additional book to the New Testament were discovered, in which it was affirmed that, after his resurrection, he raised Judas or Pilate, Herod or Caiaphas from the dead—endowed him with immortality; but having lost all that love for him which, while on earth, he showed for every human being; all that love for goodness which could not be indifferent to its entrance into any heart, however polluted it had been; all that compassion which made his miracles an unbroken catalogue of human miseries alleviated or removed,—he followed up this miraculous revival by placing the wretch where there was no chance that he should ever repent; where every thing would confirm and eternalise the foulest passions of his heart; and where his existence could be nothing but an endless consciousness of anguish. Why, I say that no external evidence whatever would allow us to receive such a book. I say that the very bigotry and fanaticism which ascribe this conduct to God would, on that very evidence, denounce the base forgery of the apocryphal document. They know Christ too well for that. Would that, through him, they knew the Father better! There is no such apocryphal document; but there is the spirit of it in many an apocryphal creed. If men's hearts had not a better standard of moral perfection than their faith, such a transaction should commend itself to their admiration, veneration, and love. It disgusts them; but their theory of the Divine character does not disgust them; for they see the glory in the face of Christ, and then, unhappily, forget that it is the glory of God.

While I think this argument conclusive on Unitarian principles, holding, as we do, that moral oneness of Christ with God which the new Testament teaches, it is, if there be—which I do not think—a difference, yet more conclusive on Trinitarian principles, holding as they do, not only the moral, but the natural and personal oneness of Christ and God. By that tenet they demolish not only the substance, but the shadow of any objection which could be

made to it. The first principle of orthodoxy, that Christ and the Father are one,—whether taken in its scriptural sense of moral unity, or with their addition of natural or metaphysical unity,—contains within itself the destruction of the orthodox system in all its leading peculiarities.

Nor is it less adapted to enlighten the darkness of ignorance, dispel the mists of doubt, and correct the errors of infidelity. We thus attain to a nobler knowledge of God than unaided nature ever taught, than reason, unassisted by revelation, ever learned. All other emblems of Deity are but faint shadows compared with this; even the thunder is but the hiding of his power. They have a glory; but it is lost in the glory that excelleth. The sun is a fine emblem of Deity. The heavens are his tabernacle; earth and sea the regions over which he reigns, rejoicing in his light, and vivifying in the warmth of his influence. When he withdraws, creation mourns and droops; when he rises, the flowers expand, the air is vocal with the songs of his welcoming, and man beholds, delights in, and joins in the thousand sights and sounds of gratulation. The mountain typifies Deity. There is no city, though vainly called eternal, whose duration is like that of the everlasting hills. The dust at its base is that of crumbled and forgotten walls and palaces. Their inhabitants had passed more rapidly into non-existence and oblivion. It is seen afar, and the traveller on the plain, and the mariner on the wave, guides by it his distant course. The gradations of its ascent are marked with the productions of earth's varied climates, as if there in representative homage from their several regions. It looks down on clouds and lightnings. To the rude plains around it is as the mighty bulwark of their protection; and it flings over them its gentle, softening, beautifying shade, as if in promise of its shelter and its blessing. Or, not to notice other single objects, such an emblem is the whole material universe. Each separate planet seems but a grain of sand to its unmeasured magnitude. The force of its movements, were worlds opposed to it, would crush them to dust, and scatter them like chaff. The complicated motions of the stars are as the workings of an omniscient brain, a universal intellect. They measure ages, but feel them not. Unchanged by time, they seem as if they had existed from a past eternity, and had

naught to fear from all the storms of a coming eternity. But humanity is a nobler emblem yet. Man sees what all this means. Its perception is in his sight; its interpretation is in his soul. Were there not the rational beings to see and hear, no heavens could declare the glory of God, nor firmament show forth his handiwork. Their beauty is felt by him, not by themselves. Their laws are investigated by him, not by themselves. In knowing them, he is their superior, and a better image of God than they are. That knowledge gives him power, another feature of the image in which he was created. Of the laws which he knows he avails himself, and to that extent becomes the master of the elements. The grant of his sovereignty extends over the animal creation. He tames their fierceness, and tasks their strength; and they minister to his wants, and do his bidding; and he is as a god unto them, for "their eyes wait upon him, and he giveth them their meat in due season." He rises yet into a higher emblem when vested with intellectual, political, moral power;—when men, by millions, receive his commands; when he sways bodies, minds, and hearts; when his words are law and destiny,—suffering to some, enjoyment to others; life to some, death to others; when his presence seems, by his influence, extended over regions and ages, and he is to mankind a blessing or a curse. But not the most highly gifted in mind, nor the most despotic in power, nor the most influential in goodness, of all the sons of men, can furnish out a picture of the Deity like Christ. At best they are but beams of that glory of which he was the brightness. Look at his miracles. In raising the dead there is an indication of divine power which nature never supplied. Look at his knowledge of the human heart and future events. That emanated from a higher wisdom than what designed the orbits of the planets, or combined the elements of material existence. In the dignity in which the Galilean peasant walked the earth, and looked down upon its rulers, and rebuked its lords, and raised its slaves, and legislated for human hearts, and promised eternal life, and established the kingdom of heaven, learn the moral grandeur of God. That unsullied purity on which the keenest malice and the vilest falsehood could fix no stain portrays the Divine holiness. That untiring patience which no stupidity or perversity could baffle; that

lowliness which disdained not the child, the slave, the sinner, the outcast; that kindness to all, which consorted with the Samaritan, and was gracious to the Gentile,—do they not preach to our inmost hearts of God's forbearance, condescension, and impartiality? That mercy which so promptly welcomed back the erring follower, and so generously prayed even for his murderers, is it not an impressive lesson on the fathomless mercy and free forgiveness of our God and Father? And that benevolence which prompted him to incessant exertion; which supported him through unparalleled suffering; which was alike the soul of his discourses, his actions, his miracles; which shone through his life and his death; whose splendours were around his brow when he expired on the cross, and when he sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high,—what is it but a glorious revelation of the glorious truth, that God is Love?

Thus have we learned Christ; thus do we come unto God through him; thus hath "God shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." There is the ultimate object. The Mediator, the man Christ Jesus, does but acquaint us with his Father and our Father, his God and our God—the only God of his and our supreme affection and adoration. In him we find the everlasting and all-sufficient portion of our souls. His favour is better than life—life, with all of earthly good which enriches it; it is the possession of a purer happiness, and the pledge of perfect bliss. We shall be one with God and with Christ, and the boldest aspirations of humanity can point no higher.

Sermon XIX.—The Power of Christ's Character.

"I can do all things, through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Phil. iv. 13).

If the term power is used without explanation, it is commonly referred to political authority. It is the attribute of kings. "Those in power" are the persons who fill high offices of state; who frame or administer a nation's laws, direct the movements of fleets or armies, and super-

intend the various internal arrangements or external relations of a community. But as, through industry and commerce, different portions of a people rise to opulence, it soon becomes evident that political authority is frequently subservient to other views than those of the individuals in whom it is nominally vested. Men will not thus acquire riches but under a government which affords them something like security; and if security is conceded, there is no preventing their arriving at the possession of influence. They can make their friendliness an advantage, and their hostility a deprecated evil, not only to the labourer who is beneath them, but to the senator or noble, the minister or sovereign, who is above them in the order of society. Hence, *wealth is power*, a power which grows up under, but which in time raises its head above and controls, the operations of political authority. Gold turns aside the sceptre, as the sceptre superseded the sword. The process goes on; another element mingles itself in the social mass; the mind, as well as the soil, becomes cultivated; information, as well as riches, is amassed; the light of intellect dawns and brightens and spreads; and, following, with both wealth and authority, the same course that wealth did with authority, it enlarges the application of the term, adds another maxim to the former, and makes it perceived and felt and recognised that *knowledge is power*. And truly it is; a more pure, a more subtle, a more elevated and lasting power, than either wealth or authority. It first checks their abuses, and then assumes their direction. It holds forth that prize of opinion, which the one cannot command, or the other purchase. An enlightened nation cannot long be sacrificed to the interests of individuals or of classes. The men of mind soon, in real influence, walk side by side with those of wealth or station. Where learning has been made a monopoly, they have taken the lead among privileged castes, generally by means of a priesthood, as in Egypt, India, and in the Romish church during the dark ages; and as knowledge spreads itself through the bulk of a community, despotism and privilege sink before it. But there is yet another ascent in the scale, a more exalted and beneficent species of influence, the moral energy of goodness; and in a nobler sense than in that of station, wealth, or knowledge, may it be said that *character is power*. It

attracts affection; it enforces admiration; it secures confidence: and therefore, and thereby, it must exercise extended influence. I speak not of the negative qualities,—the mere inoffensiveness, the often blundering well-meaningness, which are so frequently dignified with the name of goodness; I speak of real excellence; of virtue—enlightened, consistent, and active virtue; and I say that its force on society is the greatest of all forces that are framed to bear upon society; that it stands in a similar relation to knowledge with that of knowledge to wealth, and with that of wealth to authority. Power works only on base fear; wealth can bribe only the senses; knowledge sways only the intellect; but the dominion of character is on the heart. Its potency is that of admiration, confidence, and love. It goes forth in society like the beneficent William Penn among the Indians; and who, even of the most savage, ever darted arrow or brandished tomahawk against the man who never violated faith, committed injustice, or neglected kindness? It was no vain boast of the Christian converts, whose minds were enlightened and whose dispositions were purified and elevated by the gospel, that it had made them "kings and priests." Even in their poverty, sufferings, and martyrdom they exercised a power over the world, which far surpassed, and soon overthrew, and has long survived, that of the most rampant despotisms and most crafty hierarchies of those times and countries.

I make these remarks because this species of power is so preëminently employed in Christianity. If it were required to select a single particular as that in which, more than any other, the energy of Christianity is embodied, I should say it was in the character of Christ. The apostle must have had a strong perception of it in his mind; he must have had a strong experience of it in his life, when he used the language of the text. It seems to dilate his imagination, and raise him to a sort of human omnipotence. He had tried it in success, and he had tried it in disappointment; it had availed him in the snares of abundance, and under the pressure of want; it was sufficient for him in the toils and sufferings of life; and he feared not, in its might, to confront death; nothing seemed formidable in the comparison. "I can do all things, through Christ which strengtheneth me."

That the apostle could intend by this expression to intimate that he had miraculous supplies from Christ of mental firmness, is an exposition unsupported by any doctrine which he taught, or by any historical facts in the New-Testament record. That he meant by Christ the teachings of Christ, and not Christ personally, or his personal character, is an interpretation which shows little more than a distinction without a difference from that which I have advanced. The teachings of Christ, so far as they did not merely evolve the spirit of Judaism, or illustrate the facts of nature—that is, so far as they were peculiarly and exclusively Christian—were really and essentially a commentary upon his own mission, life, work, death, and resurrection. He was the Christian revelation. And it is in the exhibition of his example, as the perfection of humanity, that the power of the gospel mainly consists. I purpose briefly to show the truth of the apostle's declarations, by tracing the actual exercise of this power, the influence of the character of Christ upon the heart of man. This was the great source of apostolic devotedness, and, through that, of the original diffusion of the gospel. What made these men so cling to Christ with their whole hearts and souls? Not the low hope of temporal good and greatness; for, however that might influence some of them at the outset, he took especial care to disabuse their minds of the mistake, and to show that of the world they had only to expect that as it dealt with the Master so would it deal with the disciples. Not any peculiar expansion of intellect, drawing them by congeniality towards one whose discourses were those of pure reason working on divine revelation, the true and universal light, the word or wisdom of God incarnate in humanity. Their understandings were beclouded and prejudiced, and long was truth in clearing away the mists of their minds. Not sympathy in his benevolence: their spirit often called forth his rebuke; and they were many a year undergoing the transformation from partisans into philanthropists. No, it was his character; that character of simplicity, dignity, harmony, loveliness, and perfection, which wrought upon their feelings; it was love to him which discipled them, which attached them to his person in life, and which sanctified them to his cause, and made them its messengers and martyrs after his ascension.

The work began in their hearts, and thence ascended to their minds, and thence expanded to their characters. The love of Christ constrained them, and in its power they constrained the world, and brought thousands into that moral subjection which is spiritual liberty. Look at the Epistles of Peter and John, written so many years after personal intercourse had ceased. By what fervour of affection are they animated! With less advantage for the impression, but with a mind of higher order to receive it, what a principle did it become with Paul! It was even the description of the Christian character; and a convert was one who had learned to "love the Lord Jesus."

From that time to the present—and more particularly in later times, now that the laws of mind are better understood, and the nature of morality is more clearly ascertained, and the standard of excellence is generally raised—I verily believe that the character of Christ has operated materially, and will increasingly so, in preventing unbelief in some minds, and in mitigating the hostility of unbelief in others. How many there have been, who, while they rejected Christianity, have yet paid homage to the beauty of the Saviour's character! They could not wage war with that. They felt as Titus when he would have spared the temple, while he gave Jerusalem to desolation, and its sons to slaughter or captivity. Respect for the character of Christ draws a line of demarcation between the different classes of unbelievers. It almost universally distinguishes the nobler from the baser sort; the sceptic from the scoffer; the infidelity of misguided minds from that of vicious passions. And I have known its efficacy, where other means had failed, in preserving, and even in converting, from unbelief.

Among professed Christians it has been, and is, a barrier against corruptions of doctrine, and saves our religion from that total abuse and perversion to which it might else be subjected by the principles of a false theology. It is this which has prevented the proper doctrine of the Trinity, the Athanasian Trinity, from ever becoming thoroughly inwrought into men's devotions, hearts, and lives. That doctrine is only a speculation, after all. Trinitarianism is a nominal and professed faith far more extensively than it is a real and practical faith. Prayer may be sometimes

addressed to the Son, and may be commonly wound up with a doxology to the three persons; but there is a great preponderance of worship addressed to the Father through Christ. Why this inconsistency? They read the life of Christ, they feel the devotion of Christ, and he leads them to the Father, in spite of the creed which would lead them in adoration to himself. The power is on them of the character of Christ, the humble worshiper of the Father; and, constrained by that, they bow in the temple of Jehovah, as one of old did in the temple of Rimmon, under the constraining pressure of the master's hand. The devotions—the written and oral, the public and private devotions—of the whole Christian world, are a testimony that, practically, Christ is not regarded as equal with the Father; that men's hearts have been, in some degree, saved from the error of their heads; and that the character of Christ has struggled more successfully in their feelings than his words have in their faith, to preserve the sole and absolute supremacy of our God and Father from participation and degradation. More and more may they feel and heed the appeal which it makes; listen to its meek and sorrowing demand, "Who hath required this at your hands?" restore their homage to Him whose right it is; and obey the injunction, "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve"!

And when men fell into the error of deifying Christ, the force of his character operated even by that to check yet worse error as to the Divine character. They could misinterpret nature; they could misinterpret scripture; but they could not misinterpret the moral character of Christ. They made God arbitrary, but they could not make Christ arbitrary; they made God partial, but they could not make Christ partial; they made God unrelenting, but they could not make Christ unrelenting; they fancied that children were under God's curse, but they saw in the gospel that children had Christ's blessing; they fancied that God could not forgive, but they read there how Christ forgave; they speculated on the Father's vindictiveness, but they gazed on the record of the rich love of Christ: and so, carrying Christ into their complex Deity, they bore with him benignity also, and their calumniated Maker was not depicted as utterly hateful. They could not degrade Christ

morally so low as they have degraded the Father; for there was the plain historic record to confront them. There was, as it were, sight to restrain the aberrations of their faith; fact to repress the wildness of their speculations.

How many directions have there been, and how many are there still, in which inducements offer themselves to Christians to go wrong in morals, from which the surest safeguard is in the character of their great Master! When a worldly spirit threatens to possess itself of the mind; to possess itself of the church; to prostitute religion to earthly pomp and luxury and power; to transform it into one of the many contrivances for lording it over others,—how does that spirit stand abashed if once it can be forced into that presence of Christ which the gospels produce in the mind of the reader! The continued companionship of one so utterly unworldly as was Christ—his spiritual companionship, I mean, by the study of the records of him—makes one feel how little and vain, how empty and unworthy, is all this pride and pretension. His moral regality was never greater than when he washed his disciples' feet, or sat at meat at the publican's table. It is curious how ecclesiastical usurpation, in its most insolent assumptions, has yielded a verbal homage to the contrasted character of Christ; and "Servant of Servants" is the title even of the wearer of the triple crown. What is the whole life of Christ but a rebuke of personal arrogance; and not less of any other arrogance, of wealth or greatness, which makes man regard his brethren only as the instruments of his own vanity or selfishness? It is in this mode of studying him that we appreciate the justice of the reasoning that we should learn of him, "for he is meek and lowly of heart." And if we rush toward the other extreme; if we aim not only to be not of the world, but to be not in the world, not in its ordinary places of resort, or its common interests and feelings, but alienated by the secluding spirit of monkery, or the singularities of ascetic piety or affected austerity, how strongly do the cords of love to Christ draw us back within the holy circle of his example, and show us that we cannot retain his companionship if we renounce that of mankind! When he withdrew into solitude, it was because he was social; not that he was anti-social. It was to restore the calmness of his mind; to re-string his ener-

gies; to sustain his communion with God and his own heart; to keep distinctly before him his great work; to prepare him for coming forth again amongst men, as their benefactor and blessing. To call him the "friend of sinners" was the glorious reproach of the hostility of hypocrisy. Like the prophet who, meaning to curse, still found that he was pronouncing words of blessing, his enemies, in labouring for the blackest vituperation, only pronounced the most beautiful panegyric. The mistaken piety that severs itself from humanity, under the notion of thereby uniting itself more closely with divinity, could not have remained in a personal attendant on Christ, nor can it in the enlightened student of his written life. He sends his disciples to no literal, to no mental hermitage; and even in the seclusion of devotion, he teaches them to adore God in their secret worship as the common Father of themselves and of their mortal brethren. And yet his devotion is that of the purest spirituality. It is the homage of the heart, with no contingency on human aids or human forms; social, not by crowding men in temples, or arranging them in processions; but by every one before his God bearing his brother on his heart. Then, how many bad passions—which there is too much in society to produce, and even in creeds to encourage—are restrained, and, in fact, always have been, by his personal demonstration of the opposite qualities! There are creeds whose legitimate influence would be to make man unforgiving; creeds in which mercy is nothing but a name; creeds in which infinite perfection is supposed not to allow penitence to sever the bond between guilt and punishment. Why have not these dogmas made men merciless? Amongst other causes, yea, prominent and preëminent amongst them, has been the rich colouring of mercy and compassion which mistaken believers have yet seen spread over the life of the Founder of their faith. There was an antidote to their doctrines. Their Christian love corrected practically their unchristian logic. The false god in their faith would have made them stern; the true Christ in their feelings moved them to mercy.

And so it is with bigotry. Men may say that hating the wicked with perfect hatred, the unwarrantable sentiment of the Jewish Psalmist, was inspired, every syllable,

by the Divine Spirit; but they do not, they cannot, imbibe it. No, even though their version of Christianity makes the Deity thus hate a large portion of his rational creatures. They have so learned theology; they have not so learned Christ. There are no hatreds of his on record to keep alive the feeling. All that nature has implanted of kindness in the human soul is cherished by his words and actions. All of bigotry, sectarianism, and party spirit that falsehood, interest, or passion have generated, is encountered by his mild but firm rebuke. There was an atmosphere of love about him; an expansiveness of feeling that threw itself out in wider and still widening circles; a halo of glory, the glory of benevolence, around his brow, that irradiated even the countenances of all who approached him, imparting to them a portion of its benignant lustre. And how fares, in the view of his efforts, the inactivity that says, "Soul, take thy rest," while the world is full of errors to be corrected, of oppressions to be checked, of wounds to be healed? It is in his strength that good men gird themselves to the arduous work of reformation or philanthropy. Fiction has her scenes, and poetry her lays, which man may lounge over, reclining listlessly in the shade, while the day moves on, and the world groans on, alike unheeded; but not for such worthless musing is the life of Christ. Every page of that would sting his conscience. There is no succession of idle day-dreams to flit over his passive mind like the fantastic clouds on his vacant gaze. It stirs his soul to be up and doing; it points to the work our Father has assigned, and commands that it be done while it is day, and we can do it through Christ thus strengthening. Nor less do we learn to bear. That same contemplation of our Master which creates exertion, destroys despondency. Through Christ we can suffer, can die. He could: that unrepining object of calumny, that meek endurer of insult and injury, that resigned victim of sacrifice. Lamb of God! well does he take away the sin of the world, whether the world rebel against its Maker's laws, neglect its Maker's will, or repine under its Maker's chastisements.

The influence of which I speak, as residing in the character of Christ, is that arising from mere contemplation, and not that conveyed by means of logical deduction, con-

scious imitation, or a sense of obligation. It is simply the effect produced by the sight of moral loveliness. It does not act like a doctrine, from which we deduce by argument a set of practical inferences partaking of its truth and importance. It does not act like a precept or command, where we consider the duty enjoined, the authority of the legislator, the sanctions, in reward and punishment, of the law, and dispose ourselves accordingly to avoid the one and obtain the other. It does not act like a general principle of moral science, that of utility for instance, where we have to observe the various bearings and results upon ourselves and society of this or that action or course of action, and by a sort of calculation arrive at a practical and obligatory conclusion. It does not act even, though this is the nearest approach towards it, like authoritative example; duty exhibited in order to be enforced; precept conveyed in the form of action, instead of being in the form of words. Its influence is more refined than this; though not, perhaps, less universal. It is like that formation of a purer taste in the arts which takes place in those who live amidst the noblest specimens of the greatest masters. Even without study, the habit of seeing excellence disgusts them with inferiority. It is like the society of men of elevated minds, who may neither profess nor intend to inculcate upon us their sentiments, but from whom we unconsciously imbibe them. It is like the effect of being devoted to the study of the literature of any particular age or school; it tinges the modes of thought and of expression with its peculiar colouring, though the idea of imitating may be the furthest from the mind. It does not imply the action of the being whom we thus regard, but merely his existence. It is what Paul described when he spoke of Moses communing with God on Mount Sinai, and gazing on his glory, so that, when he descended, his face yet shone, and so brightly, that the children of Israel could not look thereon steadfastly. It is the transformation he depicts in Christians when he adds, "and we all beholding, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image." This is the only way in which the highest and purest kind of benevolence can be taught. Disinterestedness cannot be inculcated. Obedience to a precept, the fear of a punishment, the hope of a reward, are inconsistent with its very definition. It can only be

promoted by its exhibition. All that sanctions can do is to impel us to do good because it will secure our own final happiness. They cannot make that happiness to consist in the advancement and contemplation of the happiness of others. This is the state towards which the Christian advances, but which cannot be attained by an act of volition or by the imposition of a law; and which is so facilitated, as it could not be in any other way, by familiarity with the character of Christ. This does what nothing else could accomplish. Many of the things which constitute moral perfection, the Christian might do through the aidance of doctrines and precepts and promises; but he can only do all things through Christ strengthening him. Here is the completion of the agency of the gospel. This puts the seal of perfection on the means of grace. It is the top-stone of the temple, and angels might shout, "Joy, joy, unto it." The gradation of influence is complete from the first fearful appeals, which alarm the basest minds, to the last lovely display of excellence, which the purest minds delight to look upon, and grow into as they gaze; from the terrors of the Lord, knowing which we persuade men, to the being like him, because we see him as he is.

Thus may we be strong in Christ, strong in the profession of his word, amidst manifold corruptions, doctrinal and practical, spiritual wickednesses in high places, which usurp the authority of God, and disfigure the glad tidings of salvation; bearing our testimony by speaking the truth in love, as he spoke it, whether men will hear or whether they forbear. Thus may we be strong in Christ, in the temptations which poverty or wealth may bring, learning how to be abased and how to abound; holding all earthly things at their intrinsic value, having weighed them in the balances of the sanctuary; and looking away from what excites or dazzles men, to the Lord of life and glory, who had not where to lay his head. Thus may we be strong in Christ, to achieve every needful moral victory over our own hearts, passions, and prejudices; cutting off a right hand when it causes to offend, and bearing the cross when it is to be borne; shrinking from no self-sacrifice which heaven requires, and which purifies for heaven. Thus may we be strong in Christ, to labour for mankind's improvement; spending and being spent in every good word and work;

serving our generation in the work of the Lord, that at last we may fall asleep in Jesus. Thus may we be strong in Christ, in the seasons of our hearts' weakness; when each staff of our earthly stay may be broken; when the billows of affliction pass over us, or we have to walk through the dark valley of the shadow of death. And if aright we read the gospel, we too shall find, with the apostle, his grace sufficient for us, and his strength perfected in our weakness.

Read, then,—read from week to week, and from day to day,—read, and read again and again, those beautiful memorials of what Christ was in the evangelical records. Read them, for there you will find the simplest and yet most comprehensive annunciation of the Christian law—the law of our lives, the law of love. Read them, for there you will behold the great, the peculiar, the wonderful, the sublime sanction of that law in the ascertained fact of a resurrection from the dead, a resurrection to immortality. Read them, for you will there see the perfect pattern of what humanity should be,—a Saviour whose office was to be an example to mankind; an example which we are bound to follow. Read them, for there are the most energetic and the most melting persuasives to reformation and goodness; the voice of the faithful shepherd calling back from their perils the wanderers from his fold. And read them, for there is Christ, who strengtheneth us to do all things by what we see he was and did. Great and happy will be the material change, when this vile body shall be fashioned like unto his glorious body, when the natural shall have become spiritual, the corruptible have put on incorruption, that sown in weakness be raised in power, and the mortal be clothed with immortality: but greater and happier the moral change, when mind, heart, and character shall be all completely moulded in the Saviour's image; and when that spirit of our Father which was given to him without measure shall fill our bosoms to overflowing with love and goodness. Oh, may strength be ours: strength now, to encounter the trials which protract the coming of the blessed consummation; strength then, to bear that exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

Sermon XX.—Christian Liberty.

"If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John viii. 31, 32).

He whose soul is thus emancipated is indeed a free man—the only free man in the world; free in spite of all oppressors and restrictions; free in exile, in prison, or in bonds. His mind is at large, and from the bright world of truth and love and hope no created power can bar it out, or check its bold, excursive, and blissful movements. His inward life is in a higher sphere than that of tyrants or of bigots; and there he is, uncontrolled, with his Protector and his Father, God. But this is Christian liberty in its most exalted and spiritual form. It has lower degrees and external relations and earthly hopes; stepping-stones, by which the feeble and the timid make their first attempts at the glorious ascent; and which, though in comparison they may be deemed worldly and beggarly elements, have yet a worth in their influence and tendencies that raises them to rank amongst the most precious things of this life, and which are dignified by the extension of their results upon mind and character even into eternity.

There are three kinds of restraint to which Christian liberty, in its perfection, is opposed. The first two are external, the third is internal. Those consist in subjection to other men, this to ourselves, our own passions and prejudices. The three are, political control, sectarian influence, vicious propensities.

1. Christian liberty implies freedom from political control.

To know the rights which Christ intended his disciples ultimately to possess, we must look at the duties which he immediately enjoined. In the one we find the measure of the other. They were not to make any profession which belied their hearts, though it was demanded by Jewish priest or Roman emperor. They were to endure violence, but not to employ violence. They might be plundered, but they were not to plunder. They were to make their public confession, exercise their worship, and disseminate their opinions, by reason and persuasion only. Now what does all this imply as their duty, when they should have

political power? That they should not plunder; that they should not bribe; that they should not restrain; that they should not interfere with profession, worship, or proselytism. The claims of their adversity became the duties of their prosperity. They acted on the principle of perfect religious liberty, and took all the risks: to govern *Christianly* is to establish perfect religious liberty, and free it from all risks. It does not exist so far as any civil or political consequences connect themselves with faith. If a king cannot change his religion, on the deepest conviction, without forfeiting his crown, that king has not religious liberty. The sceptre is a dungeon-bar to his mind, and the diadem a fetter on his soul. If a religious teacher may attain the station and emoluments of prelacy by his professed faith, and must forfeit them should his conviction change, that teacher has not religious liberty. Where one particular priesthood has rank in the state, others are not free; and where they all have, the people are not free. So far as the ceremonies of any particular faith are connected with filling the occupations, entering into the relations, or enjoying any of the advantages of civil life, there is not religious liberty. It is a fallacious distinction which has sometimes been drawn, that a state may patronise, though it should not punish. A government cannot patronise one religion without punishing others. A state has no wealth but the people's wealth: if it pays some, it impoverishes others. A state is no fountain of honour. If it declares one class free, it thereby declares other classes slaves; if it declares some noble, it thereby declares others ignoble. Whenever bestowed with partiality, its generosity is injustice, and its favour is oppression. The Christian sword of justice is a terror to evil-doers only, and not to misbelievers. The Jews pleaded that they were not in subjection to any man. Christ extended, did not limit, that freedom. Private judgment, free action, and unmutilated rights, are the Christian principles.

2. Christian liberty is restrained by the bonds of sectarianism. This is a more prevalent and a more grievous vassalage than the other. The yoke which a government puts on religionists is light to that which they too commonly themselves fix on their own necks. Sectarian fetters eat deeply into the mind and conscience. Party may be a

voluntary connection, but when it implies personal compromise, and gives individual bias, it becomes a slavery, and one of the worst of slaveries. How many Christians are mere partisans—partisans for a faith, partisans for forms, partisans for a church! Look at religious bodies. There are laws and submissions, creeds and tests, the leaders and the led—a system of coöperation and of hostility. This is not the way for individuals to know the mind of Christ, exhibit the spirit of Christ, and maintain that equality and brotherhood which he declared to be the common and essential relation of his disciples. It was from nothing of his institution that Christianity itself ever wore the aspect of a sect. His gospel was the communication of truth, not the organisation of a party. When he unfolded his divine mission, the world became dowered with discoveries, and feelings, and principles, and hopes, for its common good. They were God's gift in freedom, for mankind in freedom to enjoy. The modern plan of selecting a set of opinions, and banding men together for their defence, and making them the criterion of a Christian, and the foundation of religious fellowship, and a watchword and a Shibboleth; and thus establishing the reign of verbal uniformity, and unmeaning repetition, and exclusion, and narrowness of heart, and vexatious interferences with conviction and conscience; and bringing intellect to a halt, and corrupting the language of piety into cant, and embittering bigotry,—had not then commenced; or if there were indications of such a spirit in other forms, they only encountered the Saviour's reprobation. On those who avowed themselves the disciples of Christ, the first preachers of the gospel imposed no creed; of course, they could not make a creed the mainspring of sectarian machinery. Where is the use of freedom from political restrictions if religionists are to forge restrictions for one another?—if they are so to constitute churches, that individual minds act at the peril of social comforts, though not of civil rights? It is quite as bad for a man that his neighbours should hate and shun him as immoral and dangerous on account of his supposed heresy, as it is that the laws should degrade him on account of his dissent. It is quite as much an invasion of his Christian liberty. He may rise above it; he may despise and resist it; but the other may be despised and

resisted too—perhaps has been more frequently. Oh, that the insurrection of a determined individuality of thought could but shake down the despotism of the sectarian spirit! —that the affections, and the fears, and the combinations, and all the influences of social life, would but leave men in religion, fairly and freely of themselves, and for themselves, to judge that which is right! The second great stage of the ascent would then be gained. Men would be mounting towards the topmost pinnacle, with all its boundless prospects, of Christian liberty. For its loftiest throne and noblest seat of power is not in royal palace, nor in church, national or voluntary, but in the inmost soul of man. There it is that the Son of God makes us free, so that we are free indeed. There is the accomplishment and enjoyment of that spiritual emancipation which is the work of God, the glory of the gospel, the reward of Christ, and the dignity and blessedness of humanity.

3. Christian liberty is restrained by individual infirmities, passions, and prejudices.

He has that moral freedom with which, in our present view of the subject, Christian liberty is synonymous, who, though by constitution and former habit prone to anger, yet compels himself to bear opposition with calmness; who suppresses the indignant exclamation; who stifles the rising defiance; who feels the tumult of passion boiling up in him, and, instead of yielding to its fury, to be tossed as straw in the whirlwind, resolutely checks its progress, and, like Jesus when the storm affrighted his disciples, cries with a potent voice, "Peace, be still." He has moral freedom whom circumstances have led into temptation; who is impelled by propensities within, and allured by opportunities without; who is apparently secured by secrecy, attracted by enjoyment, and encouraged by example; but who pauses in the slippery path, and arrests his steps ere he has reached the brink of the precipice. He has moral freedom whom enemies have insulted, reviled, calumniated; who has experienced from their hands every variety of injury; and who beholds them in his power, and hears the voice of revenge prompting to retaliation; but who listens rather to the dictates of mercy, and in the depths of his soul pronounces their forgiveness. He has moral freedom who, being disposed to avarice, conquers his actions, and,

though he cannot at once change his disposition, proceeds in the surest path for its happy transformation by compelling himself to discharge the sacred duties of charity; he who is profuse, yet reduces his affairs beneath a rigid prudence and economy; he who is communicative, yet preserves inviolate the secret with which he is intrusted; and he who bears with ignorance, caprice, injustice, though conscious of desert, without being betrayed into the offensiveness of pretension or assumption. And this implies a resistance, in many cases, of constitutional propensities, not to be vanquished without a hard struggle. When we speak of man as not being born into the world a depraved being, we must not be supposed to teach that there is nothing in his constitution which may not require attention and careful direction to prevent its goading him to vice. He has tendencies to benevolence; he has also a native self-love, which is continually apt to become inordinate. Many of the most degrading vices are only natural appetites unrestrained, and carried to a hideous excess. Practical error imperceptibly becomes habitual; it entices to a gradual advance; its pace is hastened as its power is felt, until it plunges the wretched victim into all the horrors which, in age, disease, and want, attend upon the drunkard, the glutton, the sensualist—men who are in the worst of all slaveries, that of animal appetites which they have pampered till conflict is vain, abstinence next to impossible, and misery certain. Anger, not checked in youth, may strengthen into the ungovernable fury that impels to violence and murder; caution degenerate into the selfishness that hears unmoved the cries of poverty, and hugs the worthless gold (worthless in every sense, as to its owner it is no longer the means of procuring necessaries or luxuries) which would scatter blessings. Surrounding objects act upon our senses, and exert an influence which we should earnestly watch. A passive yielding to events will no more form a character of worth, than winds and waves will blow or wash the sand of the shore into the majestic shape and proportions of the statue or the temple. Man is to be tried, not moulded, by the world. He must often guard against the force of example, and not follow in a path which he knows to be forbidden, nor find either motive or excuse in the numbers who precede him; and often hard is it to resolve effectually not to be

like others, even in vice; to shake off the influence which surrounds us like the air we breathe, and mingles with our very frame. The foundation of such victories should be laid in youth. Parents should accustom their children to a rational self-denial, to the habitual check and control of their passions. Youth should be impressed, they should impress themselves, with the importance of a practical regard to religious and moral principle to their prosperity, happiness, and respectability, to their state in this and in the future world. Always remember that the passions you now sport with will become your masters, your tyrants, unless you early and constantly accustom them to control. Joyously may those passions now seem to draw you on in your course, like some heathen deity with tigers linked to his car and wreathed with flowers; but, their strength felt and their fury roused, no power but that of principle, confirmed by habit, will save you from being their victim. Passion, with only the flimsy restraints of convenience or opinion, and without that of a deep and habitual sense of duty, is but "a tiger chained with cobwebs." Call, therefore, yourselves to strict account at frequent intervals, and let the remembered maxim of acknowledged wisdom, or the brief mental appeal to a present Deity, check the unguarded speech or rash action, which you may have to deplore, when irrevocable, in the bitterness of its results, or in the conscious degradation it leaves behind. Cling to the teachings and the example of him who said, "If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

It is in their action upon individual infirmities and prejudices, to the increase of their agency in debilitating and degrading the mind and character, that the great evil consists of political and sectarian domination. Comparatively slight would the mischief be, if it terminated in mere external annoyance. Man might yet, in defiance of them, be great, good, and happy. But man is formed by them, and what a poor and misshapen creature do they generate! The natural and genuine tendency of political interference with religion must be seen where there is no check by toleration. There men's faculties seem withered when they touch religion. The absurdest stories are implicitly received. The priest is, as it were, a god, ruling the con-

sciences of men, to many of whose minds his own is but a dwarf. Ridiculous ceremonies are witnessed with a reverence yet more ridiculous than they. The matured intellect in other things has in religion only the feebleness and fearfulness of a child. And look at the thorough sectarian. He has more independence; but it is his party's independence, not his own. He has more energy; but it is the energy of party struggle, not of individual progression. He knows no truth, sees no merit, feels no love, in or for any thing beyond the narrow circle of his theological clan. Contrast with both these the enlightened Christian, the free man of Christ. Trace him in the gospel whose influences he embodies. His understanding is free. Christianity imposes no fetters; it only substantiates facts on which the mind may expatiate at large. It is the water of life, of which each may drink freely, according to the earnestness of his desire and the measure of his capacity. What tradition of the elders, what barrier of ancient or common prejudice, did not Christ overleap when truth was beyond! And thus it is that mind is strengthened and perfected. This is the true school of reason and intellect. Only on such a plan could it be consistently said, "In malice be ye children, in understanding be ye men." Observe the freedom of Christian devotion. It is not tied down to places; it is not tied down to words; it is not tied down to days and hours: they may be voluntarily used as its helps; they are not prescribed as its laws. Its object is the universal Spirit, and its essence is the heart's universal recognition of his presence. Thus devotion becomes a principle, not a form; an element of character, and not an accident of occupation. It is a part of the individual; with him rising up and lying down, tarrying or journeying, and evermore abiding in his soul. Those who feel it, walk with God, and exhibit the dignifying influence of his companionship. Look at the freedom of Christian morality: not that of a conscience which cannot go alone without positive laws; not that which hunts for particular precepts like a lawyer for precedents; but that which, defining the principle and essence of good, demands of each its just application to his own circumstances. A slavish obedience to the letter of a law must often be a violation of its spirit. Such is not Christian obedience. Its laws of righteousness

are those which are written on the heart; those which are summed up in love to God and man; those which are exemplified in the holy, fervent, and active benevolence of Christ. They exhibit human happiness as the aim; and they exhort each to cast off every weight, and run, by the shortest course and with his best powers, the glorious race for its promotion. Theirs is the spirit of the patriot, who, when ungratefully and maliciously called upon to absolve himself of some petty violation of some petty regulation, indignantly replied, "I swear that I have saved my country." How truly might the gospel be called the emancipation of the heart? How it frees benevolence! What have the world and the world's contrivances more fettered than the kind affections of our nature? A Jew of Christ's day was not at liberty—the prejudices in which he was nurtured, the passions which had been cherished in his bosom, did not leave him at liberty—to love a Samaritan or a Gentile. There might be in him that spring of feeling which would gush forth and spread abroad and flow far and wide; but it was all frozen and bound up by national and sectarian distinctions and aversions. And thus has the world, the nominally religious world as much as any, ever delighted in sealing up the fountains of generous emotion, and confining to a party or a class what was meant for mankind. He only has a free heart whom no prejudice of rank, or station, or country, or religion, or any thing else, prevents from feeling, towards any without that pale who have the corresponding qualities, all the emotions of admiration, or gratitude, or affection, or confidence, which would have been rendered to those within its innermost enclosure. The Christian spirit claims affinity and congeniality with whatever things are true, honest, pure, lovely, and of good report; and their utmost remoteness is not beyond the wide sphere of its love. It was this lofty liberty of soul which made Christ the image of God, the perfection of humanity, and the Saviour of the world. The sole object of his teaching was truth—truth unshackled by system, independent of authority, and unbent to party or partial views. If it was not in the commentaries they reverenced, he sent them to the scriptures. If it had not been written in their scriptures, he sent them to nature. If it was not traced on the face of nature, he bade them

seek and read the inscription on the tablet of their own hearts. He stirred up their souls to gaze abroad, and led them forth to range, like his own, over God's boundless universe, which in all its regions of matter and of mind, of nature and of miracle, is every where rich in moral truth. When he spoke, the lesson was for mankind. "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear." When he prayed, it was to our Father. When he told of those afar off, the hated and despised, it was to show who is our neighbour. While he lived on earth, he went about doing good and "healing *all* that were diseased;" and when he died, he died for the world. It is all one great proclamation of liberty to the captive spirit. And this is the religion whose profession we have not to disgrace; whose principles we should embody; and then whose glorious hopes we may luxuriate in. Oh, how much we have to do to be worthy of the name by which we are called! How much, to approve ourselves faithful to the Christian cause, to uphold its banner in the earth, and extend its spiritual dominion! How much, to prepare ourselves for that majestic assembly where all the sons of God shall be congregated in their Father's house; all who, in whatever age or region, have upheld the right, and multiplied good, and achieved excellence, and scattered blessings, and been true to their own hearts, minds, and consciences, to their fellow-creatures, their nature, and their God! Christian! whatever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; and in the dispelling of ignorance, the banishment of prejudice, the crushing of vice, the building up of righteousness, the growth of every grace, and the diffusion of every mercy, may the kingdom of heaven come in thy soul, "with power and great glory."

Sermon XXI.

The Progressive Character of the Gospel.

"Another parable spake he unto them: The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened" (Matt. xiii. 33).

The spirit of Christianity is essentially progressive, and its tendency to advance is obvious in almost every view which we can take of its nature and history. It is pro-

gressive in its influence on the individual believer. He begins with an act of which the character is not moral, but merely intellectual—the assent of his understanding to the proposition that Jesus was sent of God: and by degrees his opinions are modified; new feelings are excited; his course of conduct is changed; he becomes, as to the most important purposes, a different being; and the light which is kindled in him shines more and more unto the perfect day of knowledge and love, which is the object of his hopes hereafter.

It is progressive in its dominion over the world. Its introduction was accompanied by supernatural aid and agency; and, while that continued, it spread with accelerated pace from mind to mind, and from country to country, till its sound went forth to all the then civilised earth. When miraculous power was withdrawn, and the gospel was left to its own evidences and energies, there was of course a revulsion. There was a period of comparative darkness, of relapse, of corruption. But its native and inherent tendencies have not failed to manifest themselves. Nations embraced a corrupted Christianity, but that very corruption was purity compared with their previous barbarian superstitions. And the latent, but undestroyed and unimpaired, power of truth burst into active operation whenever and wherever the human mind was in a state to receive its divine impulse. But there is another view of this subject to which I would direct your attention: I mean the progressive nature of Christianity, as shown in its power to accommodate itself to, and keep pace with, the general improvement of mankind. It is a fact that the world advances; that men's views go on extending, and knowledge goes on accumulating, and civilisation goes on refining, and sentiments and manners become thereby more and more elevated. It is also the fact that Christianity is never left behind in this advance. It is found as suitable and as necessary to an enlightened posterity as to a rude ancestry. It is not too much for one generation and too little for another generation. It displays itself to each as if for that generation it was originally and peculiarly and exclusively designed; and yet it goes beyond each, and impels each forward; and another and another age succeeds, with no nearer approach towards the sounding of its depths, the exhaustion of its stores, or the

attainment of its elevations. The world never outgrows the gospel. The feebler false religions have been outworn, and the stronger have repressed the expansion of the intellect, and stayed nations in their course, and kept them in an unnatural fixedness; but Christianity holds on with the swiftest advance: it is the religion of the feeble, and it gives them strength; when "the feeble become as David," it is the worthy theme of their noblest songs; and when "David becomes as the angel of the Lord," it has for him still its ample stores of wisdom,—"things which the angels desire to look into." We may assume that, as no progress has ever yet made it obsolete, none ever will. Now, to what is this owing? That is the question I would endeavour to answer. What is the principle of progressiveness in Christianity? Whence its power of ever filling the mind, however much that mind may become enlarged? I shall endeavour to point this out, in its doctrine, its worship, and its morality.

And here I must illustrate my meaning somewhat more at large, as to the quality which Christian truth possesses of accommodating itself to the degree of human intelligence through all its diversities.

Take mind in its first and feeblest condition: take the mere child. He may know all that is essential of Christian truth; and beautiful is the form of the gospel considered as the religion of a child. To him Christianity is the tale of one who was once a child himself: who was nurtured on a mother's lap: whose increasing strength was exercised in a father's occupation: who had brethren after the flesh as well as after the spirit, the kindred of blood as well as of benevolence: who lived in a cottage home, and was taken to worship in a metropolitan temple: who asked pertinent questions of the wise and aged, and made himself beloved of all, so that he grew in knowledge, and increased in stature, and in favour both with God and man: of one who in maturity never disdained childhood, but had ever ready for it his smile, his blessing, and his heart: who rebuked those that prevented children coming to him: who told his disciples to be like little children, in their simplicity, their innocence, and their docility: who was their protector, teacher, and friend: who wrought wonders which the child has experience enough to know are wonderful: who took

the little girl by the hand when she lay dead upon the couch, and said, Arise, and she did arise: whose miracles cannot but lay hold of the youthful imagination, while there is that in them which must sink into the youthful heart: a tale of one who was sent by the Great Being whom we cannot see, but who made us all: who was instructed by Him to tell mankind of his love and care and kindness to all his creatures: who showed that being in the beauty of the flower, and the brightness of the sun, and the grandeur of sovereignty, and the affection of a Father: who told those touching parables, over which young eyes may weep, and young minds may wonder: who made that prayer to our Father in heaven, in which the child learns to pray: whom wicked men killed, but whom God made to live again: whom the good shall be made alive to meet and be happy with for ever. This is Christian truth. This is the basis and substance of revealed theology. This is the child's gospel; this is a plain story for his comprehension,—the world of divine knowledge, just as it looks when the first beams of intellect dawn upon it, with their new and faint, but increasing light.

Take the next higher gradation of intelligence, that of the child grown up to manhood, but without those advantages of education the loss of which is amongst the heaviest privations of poverty. The mind may be stunted, but even under the most unfavourable circumstances it does grow, though it be but slowly. Judgment does become stronger, comprehension does become larger, observation does become keener, though scarcely more than the first sealed page is opened of the book of knowledge. The mind of the man, even of such a man as this, wants more in religion than that of a child. And whatever he wants, he finds. He finds it not in a distinct revelation, or portion of the revelation, for his use. There is not one book set apart for the child and another for the man, like a succession of lessons at school. But he finds what he wants in the same book, the same narrative, the same passages, as those which furnished out the religion of the child. They mean more than they did then, because he needs, and can discern, more in them. He has become conscious of sin; he has felt the consequences of sin; he wants assurance of pardon, and there it is; in that very tale of the father and his wandering son, over

which he wept in innocent sympathy and filial feeling, and over which he weeps now tears from a penitent heart in the reception of God's mercy to a returning sinner. He has had his difficulties about the world; the regularity of some things, the irregularity of others; the falling out of like events to the good and the wicked; the frequent prosperity of the unrighteous: for all these are obvious enough to the observation of humble life, and painful and puzzling are they often. He goes to Christ; and the very words which told the child of God's having a father's care have become, have grown into, the doctrine of a Providence. He has become fearfully aware of the strength of his passions, the effect of circumstances of temptation, the power of evil habit: he wants more energy of self-restraint; he wants motive; and there it is for him, directing him to watch his heart, telling him of death, of judgment, of recompense, of punishment. His lot in this world is labour, and sorrow its frequent accompaniment. It is not so bright as it was to his young eyes, and all that relates to another world grows on him in importance. The very word "rest," meaning so little to the child, has become to him a precious promise. The change is like that of the apostles after the resurrection of their Master. The Christ of his admiration and love is no longer merely a benignant man upon the earth; his Christ is in heaven, and therefore the Comforter is sent down into his heart. Yet all this is the self-same religion, the self-same story, told in the self-same words; but the mind has more strength, more experience, more wants, more capacities; and that same plain tale that delighted the child, proves that it can minister to all these, supply and fill them all, pervade the whole of the extended space, and be the religion of man—of uncultivated man; but of man, thinking, sinning, sorrowing, and hoping; and that with as much facility and perfectness as it was the religion of the very child.

Let us now advance to a loftier condition of humanity. Let us take the man of education, talent, and acquirement; the man whose mind has been developed; whose faculties have been exercised; whose sentiments and taste have been refined and elevated; whose character altogether is fashioned in more proportioned mould. Has this man a single indication, more than the other, of having got beyond or

above Christianity? Not one. He requires more rationality, more coherence and consistency; he requires a theology which shall be philosophical; he requires more utility in duty and more refinement in motive; and he has it all. The New Testament has anticipated every thing for him; and there it is, waiting his reception. He is a student in history, and there are its proofs in the long array of writers, whose unbroken chain of testimony links the present with the apostolic age. He is a student of man; and he feels that appeal to the laws of mind which is made in the argument from the rapid spread of the gospel, and in a thousand internal demonstrations of genuineness. Those beautiful similitudes of the lily's glory and the sparrow's flight, which delight the eye of the child, and touch the heart of the untaught man, present to him the tasteful decorations of profound and universal truth, a notion of divine government clear, philosophical, and sublime. The vulgar notions of arbitrary command, arbitrary and vindictive punishment, positive recompense, a heaven of the purer senses merely, suit not him. And when he looks at Christian precept, he finds it only a delineation of the path of happiness: and its sanctions, as he steadily contemplates them, resolve themselves into natural consequences —remorse the gnawing worm, bad passion the burning fire, purity the soul's white robe, and conscious beneficence the glorious crown. And these discoveries he makes by inspection of the self-same record. They are there for man the moment he has the mental power of vision to behold them. We have all in Christ. It is with the facts of his life, death, and resurrection, as in the history of science with the falling of the apple. The child sees the apple fall from the tree; it is the little gratification of his little heart: a first lesson, perhaps, of knowledge, enjoyment, and thankfulness. Newton saw the apple fall; and it was the germ of the true theory of the planetary system, and of universal nature. The simplicity, the gentleness, the harmony, the symmetry of the truth which Christ taught, in word and in deed, by his discourses and his history, seem to fit them so admirably for this class, that we should presume them its particular object, had we not already seen an equal fitness in a lower sphere, and were there not an equal fitness in the yet loftier region of humanity which remains.

For, take our nature at its highest; endow it with the noblest gifts that heaven's prodigality has ever lavished on humanity; assume intellect the most majestic; imagination that sits like a god, creating worlds, and peopling them with living souls; learning resplendent in the spoils of a hundred realms and a hundred generations; feelings whose mighty fervency would bear away a feebler mind with the fury of a whirlwind, but which hear the Master's voice even in their utmost tamelessness; a spirit of God's own nobility, full of high-mindedness, and boundless aspirations, and "thoughts that wander through eternity;"—these men, these rare men, these master-spirits of the age in which they live; whom century after century passes by, unhonoured with the commission to raise up for the world; whose names designate eras in the universal history of mankind;—these men are no nearer being above Christianity, or the teachings of Jesus, than the little child that loves him while it lisps his history, and repeats his prayer to Our Father. Their eyes gaze on the same world of religious truth, by the same light of reason; only they see more, because that light has brightened, the object remaining the same, from the dawning glimmer of rationality into the meridian blaze of genius. The spirit of Christ in them is a spirit of vaster power, of intenser love, and of a more sound and more capacious mind; but it is the same spirit. I give them only the simple tale which is the child's gospel; and there, when the lordly intellect has subdued large regions of truth, it yet shall never weep that there are not more worlds to conquer. There their learning grows into a purer wisdom; and imagination stands entranced among scenes of beauty, feeling its own paintings poor as the stained canvas to the clouds of gorgeous sunset. There shall philanthropy gaze in ecstatic admiration on the cross, that costly self-sacrifice; and genius from a thousand springs drink in celestial inspiration. Though such minds may be as kingly mansions, Christianity dwells in them, just as she sojourns in the humblest hovels of ignorance; neither disdaining the one nor being honoured by the other; but in both commanding; consecrating both into a temple of the Lord; and promising each a transformation into a house of God, eternal in the heavens. Christianity in them is all that is

profound, all that is splendid, all that is mentally and morally magnificent and sublime. Oh, what truths there are for such minds as these—of God, the infinite spirit, and his paternal love; of his beneficent plans and manifold operations; of man's nature, duties, and eternal destinies; what food for speculation, thought, feeling, fancy, devotion; and what godlike impulses for the heart and life in the mere history of Christ, the Saviour of the world! And how deep has been their prostration before the glory of its unexplored and inexplorable infinity! They still felt themselves but seeing through a glass darkly. And could there be a world where Bacon, and Milton, and Taylor, and Newton were but as common men, the equal, undistinguished brethren of the multitude, we know by them, by the recorded convictions of their minds and emotions of their hearts, that they would close the reading of the plain gospel tale that childhood loves and feels, with the conjoint exclamation of their awful voices, "Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! Of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen."

Sermon XXII.—The same Subject continued.

"Another parable spake he unto them: The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened" (Matt. xiii. 33).

We have contemplated the progressiveness of Christianity in its power to keep pace with the advance of the human mind through all its degrees of elevation and expansion; accommodating itself to an enlightened age as easily as to a rude and semi-barbarous generation; filling the soul of the man as it did that of the child; satisfying and stimulating the informed and educated as easily as the uninstructed; and supplying the wants and exciting the faculties, not only of the sparingly endowed, but of the most highly gifted spirits that adorn humanity. We have shown it to be essentially the same in each; and yet observed its power, while it descended to every class, as if

for that class alone given and constructed, to urge on all by a constant impulse towards a nobler sphere. The next thing is to account for this fact, and inquire to what peculiarity in Christianity it is to be attributed. This is my present purpose. I still confine myself to Christianity considered doctrinally, regarded as an intellectual concern; and reserve for a subsequent discourse the topics of its worship and its morality.

If we look to the New Testament, we shall see at once that it may be divided into two portions; of which the one consists of history, and the other of exposition, commentary, and inference. This division holds, to a considerable extent and in a general view, of entire books; the Evangelists and Acts constituting the first class, and the Epistles the second. But though each book has its predominant character, there is yet, as there must be, an intermixture. The discourses of Christ are chiefly expository of the supernatural facts of his own character, history and kingdom; the sermons of the apostles are chiefly narrative, are indeed so many abridged gospels; and in the Epistles the events are necessarily introduced, or referred to, for the purpose of reasoning upon them. Still, whether we speak more laxly of entire books, or more strictly of particular passages, the same distribution holds: the New Testament consists of facts, and expositions of, comments upon, or inferences from, those facts.

Further, they are the facts themselves, the supernatural facts, and not the appended remarks, of whatever kind, that constitute the revelation, that are the essence of Christianity: the facts, I mean, of the mission of Christ, his works, preëminently his resurrection, and the miraculous dispensation in his name, his kingdom, which continued till the dissolution of the Jewish polity. These are what the apostles stated when called upon to define and describe Christianity. This is what Peter preached to the Jews immediately after the ascension of Christ. This is what he stated so fully and largely to Cornelius, the Gentile Theist and proselyte. And, having vindicated the unity and spirituality of the Deity to the Athenians, this is what Paul concluded his address on Mars' Hill by offering as the substance of the religion he taught. The Epistles are incidental and occasional compositions. They were—I speak generally—

written to this or that church, in consequence of this or that occurrence. The gospels bear no such limited character. Their very appellation identifies them with Christianity. They *are* the glad tidings to be announced to the world. Christianity is a religion revealed in the supernatural facts displayed by and in Jesus the Christ.

The Epistles are elucidations and applications of those facts. They are made up of opinions and arguments and exhortations growing out of those facts. Their nature is that of commentary; a commentary by the side of, or near, which no other can be placed, because it is that of men who lived under the immediate impression of these miraculous events; who were especially qualified by Providence for their work; who had Christ's commission to teach mankind; whose advantages were singular; in whom reason was, by these and other means, so elevated as to generate the notion of inspiration; who were indeed inspired, in the just acceptation of the term; and who must therefore be consulted with diligence and reverence; for though they are not, as they themselves declared they were not, lords of our faith, they yet are, as they themselves declared they were, helpers of our joy,—and most efficient is their aid.

The discourses of Christ himself are rather elucidatory of the object of his mission than the fulfilment of that mission. He came, as has been said, "rather to be a revelation than to preach one." He came to reveal immortality by rising from the dead. Yet his own interpretation of his own work must be regarded as authoritative. Alike safe and beautiful is the light shed by it.

Theology, then, is precisely analogous to other sciences. It consists, as do they, of facts observed or testified, and of principles or truths deduced. The mental operation is identical. The differences are, that in the sciences the facts are natural; in revealed theology, they are supernatural: in those sciences, the principles are limited, the subject is exhaustible; in theology, from the nature of the topics, the fund of attainable truth is inexhaustible. The principles of astronomical science are truths deduced from the facts of the observed motions and other phenomena of the heavenly bodies; the principles of geological science are truths deduced from facts relating to the construction of

this globe; and thus, in number, accuracy, importance, utility, those truths will evidently correspond with the quantum of intellect employed in the investigation of those facts. And so the principles of natural theology consist of truths deduced from the facts in nature which bear upon the being and attributes of a God; the principles of revealed theology consist of the truths which may be deduced from the extraordinary facts of the Jewish and Christian dispensations; and these, in like manner, and for the same reason, must correspond with the quantum of intellect which is brought to bear, and which is freely and honestly exercised, upon the facts from which they are derived.

The preëminence of Christianity, considered as theological science, over other sciences, and its preëminence over other religions, is in three particulars: 1st, the simplicity of the facts on which it is founded, and which are level even to a child's capacity; 2d, the fertility of those facts in momentous truth, so that even the strongest and most persevering intellect makes no perceptible approach towards their exhaustion; and 3d, the motive to continued attention in the bearing of those truths upon human happiness, that of the individual, that of society, that of time, that of eternity. To this I shall again advert presently; having first noticed the freedom of pure Christianity from the obstacles to progressiveness which its name has too often been abused to sanction, but from which its nature and spirit are most abhorrent.

Christianity does not propound even, still less impose, a creed. There is no array of propositions to be believed in the pages of the New Testament. If it did, there would be an end of the glory which we have been contemplating. The religion which sums up theological truth in a certain number of propositions can never advance with the advance of mind. It arrogates perfection; and what perfection?—the perfection of this particular man, of that particular generation, by whom such propositions were selected. These are their inferences; and they say, that the feeble mind shall not deduce less, the strong mind not deduce more, while the world shall stand. Such a faith is sure to be outgrown. Suppose every particle of it correct, yet it must always be too much for some, too little for

others. The apostles never did this; they bore their testimony to their Master, and there their commission ended: or when they went further, they spoke as to wise men, and called for judgment on what they said. Oh, this monstrous device of uniformity of opinion! Enact that all men shall think alike, shall have the same knowledge of astronomy, geometry, geology, of physics or metaphysics; that they shall comprise their knowledge in the same number of propositions, couched in the same terms; and you will do a reasonable and harmless thing compared with the enforcement of a creed as Christianity. Charge this anti-thinking experiment on whom you may, but charge it not on the gospel.

Nor has Christianity established a permanent order of men as authorised interpreters. The office of its apostles was to bear testimony, and that necessarily expired with themselves. The gospel was then commended to individual minds; it banded no standing army to keep down thought; there was no appropriation of its treasures to a priesthood, for them to coin and debase and stamp with the superscription of their own opinions before they gave it currency: it was given to the world. Make a monopoly of scientific truth, and how much further would it advance? That could be no revelation which should put religious truth in the same predicament.

Nor does Christianity limit or restrict reason. No, not a jot more than science. The facts of science are of divine origin; but that is a reason for exercising mind upon them —not for receiving them as inscrutable mysteries without comprehension, still less for believing unintelligible things concerning them. We do homage to the Christian record by reasoning upon it; we put it to the use for which it was given. Ill does he thank God for that boundless field of knowledge who never labours at its cultivation, or who deems any portion of it reverenced by being left untilled, and therefore barren of the fruits which it would yield to his toil.

Nor does Christianity denounce mere mental error, or promise recompense to mere correctness of opinion: the faith it honours is the heart's trust in God—not the profession or admission of a creed. Foully have its real sanctions been misapplied; and fouler still has been the forgery of threatenings it never issued, to terrify from the denial or

investigation of tenets which it never taught. They are impediments alike to the mind's course and to the gospel's course; and in their destruction is the one emancipated and the other glorified.

And while it is unshackled by these human impediments, the Christian revelation of the completion of God's government by the doctrine of man's immortality, exhibited in Christ, is most abundant in the most powerful excitements to thought that can be imagined.

It holds out to us the prospect of knowing more of God; and who would not know more of him, the Infinite Spirit, whom to know is the soul's eternal life? There can be no other such object of contemplation. The wisest have spent their earthly existence in feeling after him, if haply they might find him. To whatever eminence the progress of mind may lead, we only gain a wider view of the importance of knowing him. All the learning of the Egyptians did but make Moses draw near with profounder reverence on Horeb to see the great sight of a further manifestation of the Deity. Here alone is an opening and an impulse for the mightiest mind to go on for endless ages.

Is not the character of Christ a stimulus to thought? Is not man the proper study of mankind?—man, in his universal attributes; man, in his distinctive peculiarities; and, above all, man, in a singular instance, exhibited in the full perfection of his nature? What researches have there not been into differences of colour and physical constitution? what investigations have there not been of national character? and what are these to the phenomena of the human mind and heart raised to spotless perfection? Does not every principle and feeling within us bid us come and behold his glory—the glory of the best beloved of the Father, full of grace and truth?

Is not the present state of man upon the earth a problem ever before our eyes, ever affecting our feelings, ever impelling our minds to dwell on that solution which Christianity alone affords? So long as we must see the wicked prospering, and the righteous often trodden down; selfishness driving on through its reckless and triumphant career, and the heart full of love only the more lacerated for its generous tenderness; unworthiness elevated by seeming caprice, and excellence holding a vain struggle with out-

ward circumstances,—so long must there be abundant motive for meditation on that beautiful and all-instructive picture of Providence—Christ rejected, deserted, sorrowing, agonising, defamed, crucified; crying, "My God! my God! why hast thou forsaken me?" and rising from the tomb to endless life, boundless happiness, and refulgent glory.

Is there not in ourselves a ceaseless inducement to apply to the record where we may best study the end of our creation, the realities of our condition, our moral relation to the Deity, our state in the sight of God, our prospects in futurity? Oh, this is matter for serious and earnest and constant thought to every individual. It is Christianity that indicates our true position in the moral universe. It is by Christ that we come unto the Father for pardon, consolation, and guidance.

Is the world nothing to us,—the millions of fellow-creatures of like nature, passions, sufferings, and capacities with ourselves; the successors of millions who have lived, and are not; the progenitors of millions who shall be when we and all this generation shall have passed away? Revelation gives the clue to man's universal destiny: it unfolds his past, his future history. It is the book of humanity. There finds philosophy its truths, and philanthropy its motives. There we see something of the springs of this great machinery, and of its tendencies. There we behold evil working out good, confusion generating harmony, and God's plans moving on to the display of his glory in his creatures' felicity.

Look at the construction of revelation itself: look at that most extraordinary combination of events, stretching through centuries, from the call of Abraham to the destruction of Jerusalem; the wonderful nature of so many of them; the yet more wonderful direction of so many more to the same ends;—there is a scene on which intellect may gaze unsated for many times the length of mortal life, which is continually illustrated by the progress of events and of science, all fresh light only showing it the more worthy of God, and conducive to man's advancement in knowledge and in righteousness.

Futurity!—who would not know something of futurity? How common has been the craving, and how insatiable! What means have been vainly resorted to for its gratification! All the glimpse that we have into the world to come

is in the history of Christ. Be the discovery little or much, it can never lose its interest. As he is, so shall we be also; and who would not have his mental sight keener, that by what light there is he may discover more and more?

This subject shows how imperatively the cultivation of the intellect is a Christian duty. Its exercise is obligatory in every point of view. The more the mind is informed and strengthened in other ways, the better prepared does it come to revelation,—a larger vessel wherewith to draw water from the wells of salvation; and the more it is exercised on that revelation, the more of truth, and loveliness, and power, and hope, will it perceive there; the face of God will not be sought in vain, and in his light shall the inquiring soul see and rejoice in ever-increasing light. Say not, "I need not trouble myself about these matters: it is enough for me to do my duty." Why, this is your duty. Contented ignorance is no Christian grace. Being uninterested about religious knowledge is no ingredient in religious excellence. Neglect of the advantages of earth is no preparation for the blessings of heaven. If all Christians, from the first, had felt this as they ought, how different would have been the history of nominal Christianity! How few of the absurdities would have stood their ground for a single generation, which have now enslaved the minds and perverted the feelings of millions for centuries! The abstraction of the Bible from common use, the tyranny of creed-makers, domination over conscience, would then never have been endured. Christians would not have been divided into parties, nor infidelity multiplied by disgust at their inconsistencies. The magistrate would not have been invited to interpose, nor the dissentient from the majority have been subjected to persecution. Diversity of opinion would have had no tendency to generate alienation of heart. Every practical friend to the use of reason in religion does his part towards the staying of these desolating plagues. He so far contributes to the coming on of a better state of things. His own improvement has its connection with the world's benefit. Christianity ever blends individual good with the general good; and the mere fact of our being honest and diligent inquirers in religion, is something towards the advance of knowledge, truth, and charity throughout the earth.

Sermon XXIII.—The same Subject continued.

"Another parable spake he unto them: The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened" (Matt. xiii. 33).

The text has intimated to you my intention to advert again to the subject on which two discourses were recently delivered—viz. the power of Christianity to accommodate itself to the human mind through all the stages of its advance, leading it on in its weakness and its darkness, expanding to its largest development, and thus showing itself adapted, not only to all the gradations of intellect, but especially adapted to that progressive principle which is its grandest and brightest characteristic. I shall now conclude the subject by showing that Christianity has the same facility of accommodation to man as a religious and moral being, that it has for him considered merely in his intellectual capacity.

I do not enter now into the question of how much of this progression, intellectual and moral, is in itself the result of divine revelation. The capacity is in our nature. Something—much of the excitement of it—there may be in the ordinary course of events; but I think there is no actual cause of it to be compared with revelation for efficiency. There is the mightiest agency to impel us onward. The countries not Christian are comparatively stationary. If they do advance, still the elevation of their minds, the purification of their morals, proceeds with but a lingering and a faltering step. It is Christendom, even nominal Christendom, whose light shines stronger and stronger. But I will not discuss this. Let the progress of civilisation originate and be carried on whence and how it may, it is enough for us at present to contemplate Christianity as in no danger of being distanced by it, but ever showing itself equal, and more than equal, to the occasion,—ever displaying deeper mines for futurity to explore, and demonstrating divinity by its inexhaustible riches of knowledge, devotion, and moral truth and power.

The secret of this capability may be unfolded in two propositions: first, that Christianity only regards religious observances as the means of morality; and secondly, that

Christianity only regards morality as the means of happiness: and my purpose is to conclude the subject by briefly illustrating these two propositions.

Many things have been done as religious ceremonies which originated in, and in turn cherished, the meanest, vilest, and basest passions of which our nature is capable. Such were the observances of ancient idolatry. They originated in terror, wantonness, and cupidity; they were perpetrated in obscenity or in cruelty. Licentious deities had their licentious rites; and sanguinary deities their offerings of blood. Man sacrificed to his God that which he thought most adapted to appease his wrath or gratify his appetite. It was fear cringing before violence, or cupidity bribing corruption. Such deeds as are on authentic record of this description could only be tolerated in a state of gross depravity, and could only tend to make that depravity yet more awfully gross. The only congeniality here, is congeniality with a downward progress to the deepest and most loathsome abyss of degradation.

A better state than this, yet one of no promise, giving no stimulus to, holding no correspondence with, improvement, is that of resting in ceremony as religion, and believing the mere ceremony to be efficacious for securing the favour of heaven. A higher degree is the observance of a prescribed ritual, where the availableness is in the act of submission to a divine command. This is the state to which the Jews were raised by the Levitical law. The merit was in the punctilious observance of that which was enjoined. It was the same with their morality. The whole system was one of command and obedience. Nothing was done for the sake of its tendency; every thing for the sake of the prescribing authority. They expected God to reward; but the reward was not in, or by, or from, the act itself; it was something to be superadded by his power. For every expression of devout feeling, for every relation of social duty, their reference was to the code: "What is written in the law?" "Thou knowest the commandments." Obedience to specific direction was the all-pervading principle. Had Judaism been given as a universal system, or as a permanent system, this would have argued defect. It was neither. It was preparation, and preparation only. Its leading-strings for reason were only to be used till

reason could step firmly. "The law was a schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ." When Christ came, he did not at once, and by a direct act, change all this; but he laid down principles, and made provision for a complete change. He taught the perfect spirituality of devotion; that it was a state of inward feeling, and not the performance of an outward action; that it belonged not to time or place, but to the heart. He did not decree the instant abolition of the ceremonial law, but he released his followers from obligation to its observance. He exhibited that perfection at which he directed his followers to aim, and which only in another world we can hope to realise, though ages may come in which this world shall witness a far closer approximation than has yet been seen. His worship was that of a soul always in harmony with its heavenly Father. He was not summoned to it by the recurrence of particular days or hours, nor did he wait till he could arrive at particular places. It refined itself into its essential elements of prayer and praise; and these were evidently resolving themselves into one single feeling, the perfection of devotion, a coincidence of will with God.

This is the ultimate form of worship. It ceases to supplicate, because it feels as well as knows that all is best. It ceases from particular praise, because it feels as well as knows that there is not more love in what here we deem brightest, than in what seems darkest; but that the one and the other are alike ordered in the infinity of God's benevolence. Worship thus becomes a single, unbroken, everlasting sensation of complacency in the works and character of God, a state of sublimity and blessedness. It is to this that Christianity tends. Who can rise above it? Not the best man on earth; no, nor the glorified saints in heaven; nor even the angels and archangels nearest the throne of the Eternal. And yet the religion which conducts towards it was completely adapted to the creatures of ceremony and submission that the most pious Jews were in the time of Christ. It did not alienate them from their temple service. While the temple stood, there did the Christian Jews keep holiday with the multitude; at least, all who were so disposed—and they were many. Those whose souls had outgrown the ceremonial were at liberty to leave it, and gradually they

did so. But all was left to its natural course. Christianity is the transition, in worship, from the ritual religion to the perfect and abstract spirituality we have just described. It leads from the one towards the other. It forbids no forms; it enjoins no forms; but it guides—and with swifter or slower pace, as man can go along with it—from formality to spirituality. Whatever of form there is in Christianity, exists, not for its own sake, but for ours; because our feelings need it for their expression, because our weakness may need it for our strengthening. Christ instituted nothing. He formed no church; he consecrated no building; he arranged no ritual; he selected no day or hour. He only decreed that "the true worshipers should worship the Father in spirit and in truth, for the Father seeketh such to worship him." And this is spiritual truth, not positive institution. If observances promote this, let them be religiously attended to by those who find and feel that tendency, and on that ground recommend it to others. So long as they do moral good, that creates moral obligation to their observance. But that is the principle. The first Christians acted upon it. We follow their example, copying their practices with such variations as the difference of circumstances requires.

They baptised their converts. It was an Eastern custom, and in those regions a very expressive one. Christ alluded to it when he told them to "teach all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." That was not an institution; for they did not afterwards use that form. That was not an institution; for they had been in the practice of baptising before. We should have had time, place, adminstrator, mode, subject, all defined in an institution. So of the Lord's Supper. This has no local peculiarity about it: it is therefore more adapted for permanence. The observance of it I think highly useful. Our love and reverence to Christ need some such expression. It makes us feel that we are not of the world, even as he was not of the world. It keeps the blessings he brought, and the sacrifice he made, constantly before us. But there is a thorough want of that conformity with the first instance on record that should distinguish a positive institution. As to time: if by, "As often as ye do this," Christ meant "as often as ye

eat the passover," that would indicate an annual celebration; if he meant "every time the cup is blessed," that was every night; if every time his followers should meet and partake of a common meal, that proved to be once a week. And yet our observance is neither daily, nor weekly, nor annually, but monthly. I do not say a monthly celebration is not the best; I say, that is for those who partake of it to decide for themselves. But all this could not happen with a positive institution, with the passover, or feast of tabernacles, or any thing done "according to the pattern shown to Moses in the Mount." We have no pattern. The first Lord's Supper was not attended by all the disciples: of them there were hundreds, perhaps thousands. It was only attended by preachers; and not by all the preachers: the seventy were absent, though the twelve were present. No women were there to partake, though several were attending on Christ, and firm believers. I only remark this to show that the principle of observance is spiritual utility, not positive institution. So it is with the Lord's day. We come together because it is good for us to do so. The first Christians must, from the nature of the case, have begun with merely an evening meeting. The Jewish portion of them still kept their national sabbath. The inferior classes of the Gentiles would only in the evening be released from their occupations. The legal suspension of labour was only obtained centuries afterwards. Being obtained, God forbid it should ever be lost! There could be few public calamities so great. But this has nothing to do with the Jewish sabbath, or with any institution by Christ. It is good; and alas for the heart for which that is not enough!

Now, here is that flexibility, that elasticity, in Christianity, by which man can never outgrow it. It is the destiny of ceremony to become inefficient, to be a substitute for that which should be its own ulterior end. But in whatever Christians practise, the end is the test and the reason. If Christians need forms, they are at liberty to employ them; but so long as they keep their proper sphere in sight—and to lose that, they must also lose sight of their religion itself—they will not multiply them; they will not pervert them; they will not rest in them; and as they grow more spiritual, they will disuse them, or modify

them, and ever hold on towards the moral pattern in the gospels. Forms will ever be, and only be, the means of grace whereby to grow in grace. All the routine of a ritual may be performed, and the individual be never the better, either in himself or to society. That cannot be said of him all whose observances are engaged in as means for purifying and elevating his devout feelings. He who advances in the love of God and the likeness of God must thereby be advancing in moral worth and moral usefulness. The God of his adoration is the standard of his excellence. To resemble him is his aim, his honour, his felicity. Christian morality is no system of direction and prohibition, of pains and penalties. Of all the law that it recognises, love is the fulfilling. Its particular precepts usually relate to the particular persons to whom they were addressed. Its general principles are what we have to do with; they constitute its morality, or rather, its one general principle of benevolence. If we are immortal—and Christianity ascertains that—the benevolent man must ultimately be supremely happy. He is forming himself for felicity; and how? Not by slavish or blind obedience; not by a course of particular actions, minutely specified, and remaining the same for all countries and all ages. Such an enumeration might extend to volumes, and yet be wretchedly imperfect, after all. And even if complete, it would do little for the formation of character like the Christian plan. We have to make our own application of the gospel principle. The love of our neighbour is eternally the same disposition; but the particular actions by which that love should evince itself, and work out his good, are subject to interminable variation. Even some of the first great results of Christian morality were not wrought by particular precept, but by the spontaneous individual application of general principle. There was no precept to desist from polygamy; there was no precept to manumit their slaves. Yet what were more felicitous achievements than these? To do good, and to find happiness in goodness, are the law and the promise of the gospel.

We often enforce the duty of free inquiry: we enforce it from the scriptures; and it is there; that is, it is there in the principles on which it is founded: but free inquiry, in that particular form in which it is our most imperative duty,

could not exist then. It arises from the obscurities which have gathered around books, all of which were not yet written, and whose living authors could instantly resolve the doubts of their disciples. The duties of civil life, the rights, and with them the obligations, of the citizen—that is to say, one of the most efficient and extensive ways in which a man may benefit mankind—had, as to the Jewish converts, no existence. They lived in a national state, which was subjugated; and doomed to inevitable, speedy, and desirable extinction. But gospel morality includes all these obligations. It expands itself at once to their comprehension; and with the same facility would it adapt itself to social arrangements, if such there be, which should surpass our present condition as gloriously as that surpasses the degraded and hopeless vassalage of Judea. That man's duty is the greatest possible creation of human happiness, can never become obsolete. Old modes of doing it may pass away; new ones may be laid open; but the gospel morality has neither passed away with the former, nor can it be superseded in the latter. In both it gives the same inspiring impulse. It makes the martyrs of one age, the patriots of another, the philanthropists of a third. Had Paul lived and written at one period of our history, he would have said, Resist the Stuarts; at another, Abolish the slave-trade; at another, Emancipate the Catholics. The gospel said all this infinitely better than by a prophetic precept which should only then have become intelligible. There is no precept like a great principle wrought into the mind, the heart, the life.

Thus Christianity always tends to inspire a devotion as pure and spiritual as man at any time can rise to. It always enjoins and prompts the duties which the times require. It always forms to greatness and to goodness as exigencies may demand He who enters into its spirit must be happy. It is the only identification of self-love and social, and that which raises both above the misery of final disappointment. As its worship is not positive, its duties are not arbitrary. They bear on their very front their own obligation and their own recompense. They conduct to a felicity which must coexist with our consciousness. We are thus united with God; the infinitely good, the infinitely blessed. We move onwards towards the complete coinci-

dence of our will with his; towards perfect light, perfect purity, perfect love, and perfect felicity. Can human improvement upon earth get beyond this? It will be the endless work of endless ages; and to eternity shall we be "filled unto all the fulness of God."

As I concluded the first portion of this subject with exhorting to intellectual cultivation as a moral duty, I shall now dismiss the whole by enjoining you to enter into the spirit of the gospel by the no less diligent cultivation of your hearts. Multiply their associations of love and goodness. Refine your piety yet more and more from the dross of formality, and the yet baser dross of selfish craving and servile fear. God is no unprofitable taskmaster. He has no gratification in being the object of unmeaning and slavish homage, or the lord of a blind, useless, and mercenary obedience. We should be his followers as dear children. The spirit of our religion is the spirit of power and love and of a sound mind. Who is our neighbour but the stranger from the ends of the earth, or from the antipodes of manners, opinions, or feelings, who may have fallen among thieves, and been stripped and wounded? To do good and to communicate are the sacrifices with which He is well pleased. If they be his pleasure, they must be our blessedness. Raise your minds and hearts to heavenly things. Be full of mercy and good fruits. Thus save your own souls, and serve your generation: then sleep with your fathers, and rise to behold the eternal spirit of Christianity winning its way to final and universal dominion. Such must be its destiny; for its origin and its power are alike divine. Of this there would be sufficient proof in the character of the gospel which we have been contemplating. How beautiful, wonderful, and beneficent is the adaptation of religion to our nature! It must have been made for man by Him who made man. It is worthy of all acceptation. Let every mind receive it; let every heart love it; let every life display its influence. May every death be its victory; and every tomb be regarded as a recording pillar of its promise of immortality!

Sermon XXIV.—Christ raising Lazarus.

"And when he thus had spoken, he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth. And he that was dead came forth" (John xi. 43, 44).

The raising of Lazarus was an act more splendid in itself, and more important in its results, than any other of the miracles of our Lord's public ministry; it was an event which, in the admiration it is adapted to excite, in the inferences which flow from it, in the hopes which it inspires, and the moral power it should exercise, can only be regarded as inferior to his own resurrection from the grave as the possessor of an endless life. That, indeed, was altogether unequalled, in importance to the human race, by any other event since the creation of the world; but for that, this was a most appropriate and impressive preparation. It was an introductory lesson previous to the full disclosure of that great truth which constitutes the gospel, and is glad tidings to the world, and by the knowledge of which the Christian feels himself a son of God, and fellow-heir with Christ of an everlasting inheritance. Although it has solved to us what to thousands has been the perplexing problem of a hereafter, or disclosed to us what to thousands has been the grand secret of the grave, yet may we not unprofitably review the steps by which Providence completed the demonstration, or the degrees by which it kindled up the light which now irradiates even the recesses of the tomb. Not at once did it burst upon the world; and in this, the most conspicuous of the preparatory circumstances, there is very much to attract and repay attention, to guide our speculations, interest our feelings, and animate our hopes.

I shall not lead you minutely through the particulars of the narrative, of which the outline is, that Lazarus, the friend of Christ, was dangerously ill; that Christ, who was at a considerable distance, heard of it, knew that the disease was mortal, but delayed to come till after his death; that Martha, one of the sisters of Lazarus, met him on his approach, intimated that his presence might have averted their loss, and that he might perhaps even yet restore her brother, to which he replied by language which, though obscure, yet was framed to suggest some hope; that at the grave, to which they proceeded, Mary, the other sister,

threw herself at his feet in grief, which moved our Lord even to tears; that then, after prayer to God, he called forth the dead, and the dead obeyed the call; and that such was the effect of this miracle, that many of the spectators believed, while others went to apprise his enemies, and urge on those fatal measures by which they thought to crush him, but which, recoiling on their own heads, overwhelmed them and their country in final ruin. The transaction may be first considered with reference to the characters which it groups around the grave of Lazarus, and which the historian has, by a number of undesigned touches, beautifully discriminated.

There were the two sisters, Martha and Mary, the most afflicted among a multitude of mourners; for their loss seems, from the esteem in which Lazarus was held, or the beneficence which he had been accustomed to exercise, to have been a public loss; both oppressed with sorrow, but displaying that sorrow in ways diversified according to the diversity of their dispositions.

They are first mentioned by Luke, on occasion of an appeal from the former, who was cumbered about much serving, to Christ, that he would enjoin her sister to aid; to which he replied by a gentle rebuke on the superabundance of her cares. Her hospitality seems to have bordered on officiousness, and her honest zeal to do honour to her guest displayed itself rather in the bustle of preparation, the incessant attention, and the completeness of the entertainment, according to the fashion of the day, than in consulting his taste and habits. Mary was less active, less obtrusive, but with a zeal as fervid, though displaying itself more in feeling than in action. Attentive to the forms of society, and prompt to be doing something, even in her anguish, Martha goes forth to meet our Lord as soon as she heard of his approach. Her conversation with him shows her intelligence, her grief, her piety, her sincere deference to the authority of the great Teacher; but Mary abode still in the house, regardless of all that passed,—conscious only of one event, and of that intensely; and there she would have remained, had not the other returned to lead her to our Lord. She rose at that call, and followed hastily, and without speaking: such grief is ever obedient; and when arrived, without any of that com-

posure with which her sister could make the same exclamation the introduction of a conversation with Jesus on the final resurrection, she only "fell down at his feet, saying unto him, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died."

Their subsequent gratitude was as varied as their grief had been. The next chapter records a kind of public entertainment at their house, when "Martha served," that is, assiduously discharged all the duties of hospitality; while Mary, in utter disregard of censure, which did not fail to follow, anointed the feet of Jesus with costly ointment, and wiped them with her hair. Their characters are both so true to nature, that we cannot doubt the reality of their existence; or avoid some sympathy with their sensations as we behold them at their brother's grave, clinging helplessly around our Lord, his and their friend, or watching with intense interest, afraid to hope, his movements as he proceeded from witnessing their grief to indulge his own; from that to prayer; and from prayer to the awakening words which gave them back their brother.

The apostles were with Christ; and that they were, was an act of heroic attachment. Both his and their safety was, at this time, endangered by being in Judea. When Lazarus died, they were beyond Jordan in Galilee. On Christ's determination being announced, they remonstrated: "The Jews of late sought to stone thee; and goest thou thither again?" On his persisting, which they regarded—and, as the event proved, justly—as the signal for his death, "Thomas, which is called Didymus, said unto his fellow-disciples, Let us also go, that we may die with him." True, their courage failed in the fierce trial to which it was afterwards exposed; but their desertion under the influence of a temporary panic, from the unexpected and astounding circumstances of that event, ought not to obliterate the merit of a deliberate return with him to the scene of peril. This miracle was their recompense. They came in affectionate adherence, exposing themselves with him to death; and they saw him restore the dead to life. They expected that to receive a victim the grave would open; and they saw it open to release one from its bondage.

There were a number of Jews present, many of whom, though not perhaps all,—as some spectators might be there

from the village of Bethany, and others from Jerusalem, which was only two miles distant,—had been previously at the house of Lazarus to sympathise with and console his sisters. They seem to have had that primary qualification for comforters, an acute sense of the evil which they would alleviate. Their own tears flowed freely. Ill does the heart brook at such times the interference of a mere looker-on, a stranger to its bitterness. *Their* exhortation not to weep is little heeded, who have no cause or disposition to weep themselves. The first anguish of bereavement is best borne alone; and even after that, an unobtrusive companionship in sorrow is the most effective solace. It is but at a subsequent period that another should remind us of the principles which should regulate our emotions, and with our bitter recollections endeavour to blend consolatory hopes. They followed to the grave; they admired the affection of Jesus; they wondered that his power had not interposed to avert the death of Lazarus; they beheld with astonishment the exertion of that power in his revival; and they "believed on him."

So it was with many; but some were present who "went their way to the Pharisees, and told them what things Jesus had done:" there were men who could witness such power, exerted for so benignant a purpose, in the capacity of spies, for the destruction of the agent; and who could go from the despoiled grave of Lazarus to the conclave of priests who were planning the support of their own authority by the murder of Jesus. This servile malignity is even more disgusting than the bloody ambition of those on whom they fawned.

But Christ himself is the principal character in the scene, and that which is most completely and beautifully developed. He had a supernatural presage of the miracle from the moment that he heard of the illness of Lazarus. This kept him away; though in remaining where he was, his own feelings must have suffered; and he knew that this family, so attached to him, would think that absence the reverse of his usual kindness, or even of his general benevolence to those who were not so peculiarly distinguished as his friends. When assured of the death of Lazarus, he immediately directed his steps towards Judea, well knowing all which awaited him there. The grave of Lazarus might

be foremost in his view; but beyond it, he saw the garden of Gethsemane, the hall of judgment, the cross of Calvary. He turned not aside, nor faltered in the path, on which, as he advanced to the one, the other rose upon his mental sight. He went to awaken Lazarus, and to be crucified. With what gentleness, what merciful wisdom, did he gradually hint his purpose to the first afflicted sister who met him on his way!—so telling her that her brother should rise again, as that she would at first refer it to the great revival, and then exciting the thought, the supposition, the faint expectation, of an immediate resurrection. How was the prophet lost in the man, when the younger sister threw herself at his feet, in an agony of tears, and "Jesus wept"! His sympathies triumphed over his prescience, and the Son of God did homage to the weakness of humanity. How fervent must have been the devotion of that moment, how strong his gratitude to God, and how firm his confidence, when "he lifted up his eyes and said, Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me"! How admirable the humility which, though it never allowed him to arrogate the honour of his miraculous works, chose that time to make a peculiar public acknowledgment of his complete dependence for such power on the God who sent him! And with what holy triumph; with what delightful sensations as to the restoration of Lazarus, and the rapture which would succeed to tears in those around him; with what blessedness of gratified benevolence; with what high consciousness of the dignity of his own mission, and the mercies, infinitely beyond this, which it would diffuse over remotest countries and ages, to all the families of the earth,—tinged with melancholy at his countrymen's rejection of him to their ruin,—must he have advanced to the tomb and cried, "Lazarus, come forth!" Oh, not of human invention, not of imposture, not of enthusiasm, could such a character be ever generated! It is humanity with the seal of heaven upon it, to commend it to our faith and love. Every trait breathes of reality, and glows with excellence. The gospel requires no better proof than this chapter. In proportion as the incident is extraordinary, the verisimilitude of character, in all who are introduced, flashes upon us, and the mere act of reading becomes that of believing. We feel that we are among human beings, the works of God, and not the poor

and strange creations of forgery or fiction. Their griefs, joys, and passions come home to our hearts; and amid them towers one, our brother, but our elder brother, spotless, though touched with the feeling of our infirmities, "a man approved of God," and well deserving to be reverenced of men; we seem yet to hear him telling of immortal life, and asking, "Believest thou this?" And we reply with the mourner to whom he addressed it, "Yea, Lord: we believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world."

Why will theologians fritter away all the truth and beauty of this description by their figment of the two natures of Christ? If any thing could cast ridicule and stamp falsehood on the narrative, it would be the absurdity of a weeping and a praying God. Why should a divine person implore and thankfully acknowledge the aid of another divine person to work a miracle, and that miracle the raising of a man to life, whom, according to that theology, he himself originally created? What could an Incarnate Deity experience of the various emotions which the evangelist has here described in Christ? They are, emphatically, the emotions of a man—of a wise, a good, a great, a benevolent and affectionate, a divinely commissioned man, but still a man; and their indications cannot, without the monstrous and self-destructive notion of his acting a part, and affecting that which he did not feel, be ascribed to a being of superhuman nature.

This event may be considered as the proximate cause of that catastrophe which closed our Lord's ministry. It was decisive in its results; its splendid nature, its publicity, the impression which it made on the multitude, the animation with which it inspired the disciples, rendered it impossible for the priests to temporise much longer, and reduced them to the alternative of rejecting and destroying Jesus, or admitting his claims to be the Messiah, and humbling themselves, with all their wealth and power and pride, before him. They determined as such a body with so much at stake has generally determined in circumstances at all analogous; they assembled and talked about the public good, and how much better it was that one man should die than that the whole nation should perish; meaning, by the nation perishing, the destruction merely of their

own ill-gotten and ill-used authority. So they took patriotic and religious counsel together, to murder, with or without due form of law, one whom they knew to be a prophet and reformer. All for the nation this, and garnished with the cant of disinterested care for the country! But they were right, though ignorantly and malignantly they said it, "that Jesus should die for that nation, and not for that only," but for the world. It was the plan of Providence for ends of which they never thought; and he whom they supposed anxious to fortify himself against their fury—so little do we know of others' hearts—was looking forward with pious resignation of soul to the cross which they were rearing. And the disciples were alike ignorantly coöperating. Soon came, in the unforeboding joy of their hearts, that day of glory when they thronged around their Master as he advanced towards the metropolis, amid the waving of palm-branches and shouts of hosanna and blessing; and the friends of Lazarus and witnesses of the miracle were loudest in the shout, and told it again and again to the ever-increasing throng; and Jerusalem, then filled from all the land for the coming festival, poured forth her multitudes to meet him; and Judea's lords said among themselves, "Ye prevail nothing,—the world is gone after him;" and Greeks pressed forward saying, "*We* would see Jesus;" and on he moved in triumph to the temple, where children joined their thrilling voices in the cry, "Hosanna to the Son of David!" and in all this they were but garlanding the victim for the sacrifice: the priests saw that instantly the blow must be struck; and that passover witnessed the treason, the trial, and the crucifixion; the zeal of his followers unconsciously hastening his death, by perpetrating which the malignity of his foes alike unconsciously prepared for and guaranteed his resurrection;—all ignorant instruments of that Providence which from evil educes good, and blends men's seemingly unconnected actions and jarring passions and opposite designs into one harmonious plan, the contrivance of infinite wisdom, and its result, universal felicity.

In considering this miracle as subordinate to, but connected with, the resurrection of Christ, in that instruction by facts which Christianity gives of man's nature and destiny, we cannot but observe that they alike seem to

negative the notion of a completely uninterrupted consciousness, although they favour that of a speedy revival. We cannot imagine that he who had returned from another world would be unquestioned about his discoveries, or that those discoveries would have remained unrecorded. No traveller would have been more eagerly interrogated, or could have had so much to tell. The silence is evidence of his intermediate unconsciousness; but it does not determine the duration of that unconsciousness. In him it seems to have continued till the fourth day; in Christ himself it terminated on the morning of the third. Some such interval is probably required by the law of that great transition which changes the mortal into the immortal man, and develops in his corruptible frame the germ of his incorruptible and spiritual existence. The time and manner is much less important than the event—the principle of immortality, than the fact: and of our entering upon endless life by a change which is fitly termed a resurrection, we are assured by Christianity.

Be that doctrine ever present to our minds. Few things are there in which the thoughts, feelings, and conduct of rational creatures should be precisely the same, on the supposition of perishing for ever in the grave, and on that of rising to judgment and immortality. Frequently the difference will be most momentous both to the individual and to society. Scepticism as to a future life, be it ever so involuntary,—be it, as a mental error, ever so innocent,—the result of honest incapacity for deciding, and not of prejudice or passion,—is yet a serious calamity; if not in such cases matter of condemnation, it is assuredly of pity; for it is the loss of motives, hopes, and consolations, for which no price could be too great, no exertion too arduous, no present sacrifice too severe. But a darker character belongs to the incongruous union of the faith which holds the doctrine and the conduct which denies it; of a belief in which judgment and futurity are realities, and a heart and life in which they pass for nonentities. Scepticism may be only unfortunate, but inconsistency must be criminal. He who "walketh in the night" of scepticism, "stumbleth, because there is no light in him;" but he who, in the day of acknowledged truth, walks in evil ways, makes even the light of heaven serve only to blazon his

guilt and condemnation. Oh, when the power that awoke Lazarus shall break our mortal sleep, and bid us come forth, may its voice sound in our ears, as it did in his, as that of a friend, summoning us to the greetings of affection and the renewal of enjoyment; and not merely to these, but to all that elevates and blesses, freed from alloy, and secured by Almighty benignity from interruption or termination!

Sermon XXV.—The Transfiguration.

"And he was transfigured before them" (Mark ix. 2).

It seems to have been some time before the minds of any of the apostles were possessed with the full conviction that their Master was the promised Messiah. The erroneous notions which they entertained, in common with their countrymen, of the nature of Christ's kingdom, rendered it inexpedient that they should have felt and avowed that conviction at an early period of his ministry. The emotions of Jesus appear to have been of a very mingled nature when Peter first, in the name of his brethren, declared their persuasion that he was the Christ, the Son of the living God. It brought full into his view all that he had to endure in that character, which they only regarded as one of honour and dominion; all the guilt and the unutterable miseries which, by their rejection of him, the Jews would bring upon their own heads; and the bitter disappointment which awaited his followers when they should find the contrast, in external circumstances, between the gloomy reality and their own fond and bright imaginings. He sought at once to nerve his own resolution, and to prepare their minds, by the first of those predictions of his sufferings and death which he afterwards so frequently repeated. Such a communication could not but excite their astonishment. It was so totally at variance with their previous notions, that their minds obstinately resisted its admission, in its obvious and literal import. It defied credibility or baffled comprehension, until facts furnished the illustration of its meaning and the proof of its truth. Yet the effect upon them was painful and depressing; and it has been remarked, and the fact is beautifully character-

istic, that "Jesus seldom, if ever, spoke to his disciples of his death but before or after a miracle: the miracle operated as an antidote to the melancholy of the prediction, and the prediction might be necessary to prevent an undue elevation of mind on the frequent repetition of these extraordinary instances of divine power."

This first announcement of the suffering which awaited him was speedily followed by the miracle described in the text, to which, indeed, only three of the apostles were witnesses, but they were those whose minds and hearts were most thoroughly devoted to their Master; and deep was the impression which it made, if we may judge by the allusions to it of Peter and John, many years after, when the one wrote his Epistle and the other his Gospel. "We beheld his glory," says the Evangelist, "the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father." And Peter thus refers to it (2d Epist. i. 16-18): "For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eye-witnesses of his majesty. For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount."

The complete account of this transaction, as obtained by combining the narrative of the first three evangelists, is as follows: "And it came to pass about six days after these words, that Jesus taketh Peter, and James, and John, and went up into a high mountain apart by themselves, to pray; and as he prayed he was transfigured before them; and the fashion of his countenance was altered: his face shone as the sun, and his raiment became exceeding white as the light, and glistering; white as snow, so as no fuller on earth can whiten. And behold there talked with him two men, Moses and Elias; who appeared in glory, and spake of his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem. But Peter and they that were with him were heavy with sleep, and when they were awake they saw his glory, and the two men who stood with him. And it came to pass that Peter said unto Jesus, Master, it is good for us to be here, and let us make three tabernacles, one for thee,

and one for Moses, and one for Elias; for he knew not what to say, for they were much afraid. And while he yet spake, behold a bright cloud overshadowed them, and they feared as they entered into the cloud: and behold a voice out of the cloud which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him. And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their face and feared greatly: and Jesus came and touched them, and said, Arise, be not afraid. And when they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no man, save Jesus only."

The change here described in our Lord's bodily appearance seems to have been of the same kind with that which revelation leads us to expect shall be wrought on the human frame by death and the resurrection. This was one circumstance which made the miracle appropriate. The apostles had been depressed by the mention of his death; they had the impression counteracted by the actual exhibition of what he would be in the resurrection, when, as their and our forerunner, he should take possession of the inheritance of the saints in light.

The appearance of Moses and Elias, known by traditional notions of their persons, or by emblematical insignia which to a Jewish imagination would at once declare them, must also have tended powerfully to sustain their faith in their Master, and exalt their views of the dignity of his mission. "They spake of his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem." The subject, in their mouths, would change its character, and gather associations of glory and blessedness. They called it his *exodos* (the term in Luke's account translated "decease"), a word so thrilling to Jewish ears and hearts; the term which designated the going forth of their fathers from Egyptian bondage to freedom, victory, and conquest; and which afterwards Christians felicitously applied to martyrdom, the exodos of the oppressed and tortured spirit to its heavenly Canaan, its promised land of rest and peace.

And then there was the well-known symbol of the Divine presence: that glory which descended on Sinai when the law was given, but with terrors that contrasted with the mild effulgence on which they now gazed; which irradiated the temple when it was consecrated, but was never again to dwell in temples made with hands; and the

voice which had spoken at Christ's baptism again commanded to "hear him," intimating that Moses and Elias, instead of tabernacling there, as Peter vainly wished, were to pass away, and the names of the great legislator and of the great reformer of the Jewish people were to become subordinate to that of the beloved Son of God, the Saviour of the world.

Without entering into the various speculations or discussions suggested by this scene, it is evident that its tendency was to inculcate the inferiority both of Moses and Elias to Christ. And they were inferior, both in their personal characters and in the mission which they had to fulfil. Illustrious as both were, they were neither so severely tried as Jesus, nor when tried so purely and perfectly triumphant. Their agency only regarded the children of Israel, and the establishment or restoration of an external and ceremonial system. They were not commissioned to be teachers of humankind; they did not declare the universal Father; they did not bring life and immortality to light. They had their allotted tasks; they were faithful in their work; but the Son was come, the heir of all things: him are we bound to hear; for his, and his alone, are the words of life eternal.

That many of the miracles of Christ should be emblematical—a kind of picture teaching—and, like his parables, have a meaning far deeper and more important than the literal record, is not at all an unreasonable supposition, when we bear in mind the nature and design of his mission, and the methods which had frequently been adopted for the purposes of divine revelation. Visions and typical actions often gave hints for reason to construe; and truth was suggested to the imagination long before the intellect had acquired power for its demonstration. Even the great discovery of Christianity itself, the revelation of immortality, is made by a fact, told by the event, exhibited in the revival of Christ. It is thus we might expect Him to instruct who has all beings and events at his sovereign disposal.

Religion itself, essentially and eternally the same, but varied in its outward modifications according to the varying circumstances and growing capacities of rational creatures, was now, by the ministry of Christ, undergoing a

transfiguration like that of his person—a change from the form of Judaism to that of Christianity. The law and the prophets were about to be fulfilled, absorbed, and spiritualised in the gospel. They were to be at once perfected and abrogated, annulled and yet perpetuated. The kingdom of heaven which Jesus instituted grew out of the Jewish peculiarity, and was the completion, crown, and consummation of that peculiarity, and also commenced the final, spiritual, and universal dispensation of Christianity. He came accomplishing the predictions of Jewish prophets by being "the light of the Gentiles." He was the promised seed of Abraham, and therefore the blessing of all the kindreds of the earth. He was the prophet like unto Moses, of Jewish brotherhood, to be heard in all things: and the things he spoke were of God's universal love and man's universal brotherhood. In being David's Son, he was David's Lord; and his royal descent indicated his bearing the government on his shoulder of a kingdom not of this world, but destined to absorb all its royalties and dominions. In his teachings, every part of Judaism underwent a glorious change, and assumed new loveliness and brightness. Universal truths sprang out of local oracles; universal goodness out of particular commands; and universal hopes out of special promises. "Jehovah, God Most High," became the Father of all, as a God Most High must be; the supremacy of his nature is the pledge of his impartiality. God the Creator became God the universal Benefactor; for if he made the sun, it shines on the evil and on the good; if he sends the rain, it falls for just and unjust. God's omnipotence ascertains, in Christ's doctrine, that the salvation "which is impossible with man is possible with him." The temples of Gerizim and Jerusalem were dedicated to the worship of God, who is a spirit, and therefore who should be worshiped any and every where "in spirit and in truth." The Mosaic precepts demanded external perfection; but how can the conduct be perfect without the purification of the heart? From the pages which recorded and enjoined their sacrificial rites, he proved that obedience was better, and mercy to be preferred. Their Sabbaths were of God; but only because, and as long as, they were "for man." Temporal promises made God the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; but

that he was their God implied their immortal being, and that they "lived to him." Christ allowed, he contended, that their law and their prophets were divine; and in so doing he showed that the end of the law and the prophets is, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and soul, thy mind and strength; and thy neighbour as thyself."

Great as the contrast of the two religions may appear,—the one founded on the principle of selection, the other on that of universal, impartial, and equal love; the one a particular directory of actions, the other an appeal to the inward feelings; the one positive, the other moral; the one conveyed by distinct and authoritative declaration, the other ascertained and operating by the agency of individual intellect; the sanctions of the one in temporal circumstances, those of the other in the heart and in heaven,—there was yet the germ of the one in the other, ready to appear and to burst forth when the fulness of time should arrive. There was no violent change, but a continued identity of religion; Christianity was evolved from Judaism, and that so gently that it is impossible to fix a point of time, and say, Up to that, it is the one,—after that, it is the other; and yet the change became at length as complete and obvious as it was beautiful; religion was transfigured, and her face shone as the sun, and she was robed in light; and Sinai's cloud of blackness only overshadowed men with brightness, and its thunders were only murmuring words of paternal love, and the glory that had filled the temple was around and upon those who went to pray on the mountain's side beneath the naked heavens; and those who had trembled in the awful presence of Moses and Elias, "when they lifted up their eyes, saw no man save Jesus only," and only heard his voice of affection and encouragement, "Arise, be not afraid."

Somewhat analogous to this is the change on the individual, when an irreligious mind and heart are brought under the influences of the gospel; and there is that moral transfiguration that clothes him with the light of truth, love, and goodness. "That is not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural, and afterwards that which is spiritual;" but in this case also the germ of the one is in the other; and the perfect Christian, and even the glorified

saint, does but exhibit the full development of what existed, however low the form and degraded the employment, in the original principles of human nature. The prodigal son only "came to himself" when he determined in his penitence to "arise and go to his father." The gospel does with human nature precisely that which Christ did with Judaism. It appeals to the nature, tendencies, and essential principles of man's constitution; it derives from them the materials of his regeneration; it ascends the heights of his intellect, thence to bring Christian truth; it descends to the depths of his heart, thence to bring Christian love; and out of the elements—which vice had scattered in darkness and confusion—of his wants, his sympathies, his desires, it makes him a new creation in Christ Jesus, where old things are passed away, and all things are become new, and all are of God, and glorious. He always sought for happiness when a sinner, and he seeks for it now, not less intently, and more correctly. His "eye was not satisfied with seeing, nor his ear filled with hearing;" and these baffled desires are trained into the hungering and thirsting after righteousness which shall be satisfied, and the aspirations towards immortality and heaven which shall be bestowed. There is a revelation—and Christ expounded it—of God's paternity in every father's bosom. There is a revelation—and to that he appealed likewise—of man's destiny to exalted knowledge, goodness, and felicity, in the disgust which even the gratification of his most cherished wish produces when it is low, base, and sinful; the undefined, yet inextinguishable, longing after something more worthy of him; the judging "of himself," in and from himself, that which is right; the benevolence surviving through depravity, which made even the rich man in hell supplicate a miracle for the conversion of his brethren; and the general impulse of our nature, however misguided for a while, towards that end and aim of our being which the gospel unfolds as the Creator's design in our formation. And as each faculty and principle becomes purified into an agency of good, and profanity is transformed into piety, pollution into purity, selfishness into benevolence, He who regarded in compassion his erring child, though yet afar off, looks down complacently on the blessed change, sees his face beaming "as it were the face of an angel,"

and declares of him too, as of the Saviour in whose glory he now partakes, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

Death is the permanent transfiguration of the Christian, "the changing his vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto Christ's glorious body." It severs him from the world; he goes, as Christ did, "apart to pray;" and anon he "shines forth as the sun in the kingdom of his Father;" and the illustrious dead are there, talking with him, perhaps, of his decease which has been accomplished; and the presence of God is there, and his glory; and Jesus comes to welcome him; and he is risen, and is "not afraid," nor shall ever know fear or grief again; and he feels that it is indeed good to be there; and he takes possession, not of a frail tabernacle, but of "a house of God, eternal in the heavens." And this exalted being is only the final growth, the full development, of poor humanity; it is that which is sown in corruption, raised in incorruption. The resurrection is but a change, eliciting from this outward husk and shell that which was in man here, and which properly is man, and unfolding it to its full dimensions and proportions. That we are "now the sons of God" involves the capacity of becoming like Christ "when he shall appear, and we shall see him as he is." "As we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly." It is the same essence, transfigured.

There is one particular common to all these cases—that the reformation is in each immediately preceded by an unusual corruption, the exaltation by a depression. Christ's brief investiture with glory came in prompt succession to, and in connection with, the prediction of his rejection, sufferings, and crucifixion. Just before the pure spirit of Judaism went forth in the life and power of Christianity, the Mosaic institutions had been corrupted, debased, and perverted most foully. The reformation of a sinner is frequently the revulsion of his nature from a loathsomeness of iniquity which has been aggravated till he becomes hateful in his own eyes. The harbingers of immortality are the sufferings of disease and the literal corruption of the grave. The same law seems to obtain as to the change, both physically and morally. There are many similar cases in the material world; as in the mineral kingdom,

where the metal seems to be consuming which is only being refined and purified; in the vegetable kingdom, where the seed seems most lost when it is about to be most productive; and in the animal, when the insect sinks into dormancy to await and undergo its transformation. And in intellectual and moral concerns we may trace something of the operation which seems at first so strange. Men are often lulled, by the negation in their characters and conduct of what is recognised as vicious, into a like negation of what is positively virtuous. They feel not the need of moral exertion. Not thinking they have to atone for abused time, they apply not themselves to the redemption of the days that remain. Not thinking they have vicious propensities to correct, they struggle not to gain that mastery of self which is the Christian's best victory. Not deeming that they have dishonoured themselves, they devote not their powers to glorify their God. There is an energy generated by the consciousness of fault that often gains an eminence of goodness and usefulness which would else not have been attained. So the prevailing abuses and perversions of their law among the Jews would call forth an antagonistic principle, would send with keener sight to the law and the testimony. The very number and grossness of the traditions by which they made void the commandment, would fix the attention of the righteous on the nature, extent, and spirit of its requirements. The obviously exaggerated importance of ceremony would deepen the conviction of the supremacy of morality; and vain boasts of the law guide to the knowledge of its subordination to a more spiritual and extended and enduring system. Such is the provision which nature and Providence have made in individuals, nations, and churches for the very grave of corruption becoming the scene and the ageney of a resurrection. And the reformation which is thus accomplished is not the simple restoration of an original state, but an advance above it, a higher form of it, a more perfect display of its goodness and its greatness. The apostles, disheartened by the discovery that the Messiah was to die, learned that he should be more than the temporal sovereign they had anticipated, a spiritual and immortal king. The recovered transgressor is more than the negatively innocent being that he was at life's commencement. Man

raised from death is more than mortal man, and becomes "as the angels of God in heaven." And Judaism was regenerated into Christianity. Oh, that we might hope that the alternate and struggling light and darkness of ages had made another of the days of His moral creation, with whom a thousand years are as one day; and that Christianity were about to cast the slough of age, and renew its youth, and rise above the scenes of division, and contention, and confusion, and worldliness, and mental slavery, and erring zeal, in which it is now involved, to the holy mount of its transfiguration, where the glory of God should be revealed, so that all flesh should see it together! Something of this nature must happen. There must come a recurrence to the genuine spirit of the gospel. The wealth and worldliness of churches must open men's eyes to its original simplicity. The cumbrous absurdity of creeds, generations behind the stage to which intellect has advanced, must prepare for the revival of its rationality. The heavy yoke of sectarianism must generate the desire for gospel freedom, and the will to enjoy it. The obstinacy which continues to enforce faith by anathema will drive the mind to rest on love and good works. Bigotry, by its very tyrannising, will insure success to the holy rebellion of charity. Hasten the time, O God! Let the gospel reappear, without spot or wrinkle, in all the loveliness, dignity, and power of immortal truth; impositions, and restrictions, and traditions, and narrow-mindedness, and animosities, and superstitions, and inconsistencies, individual and national, fading from its presence; and all kindreds, people, and tongues rejoicing in its light, walking in its liberty, and raising in holy union the first strains of that final song of glad redemption which shall resound throughout the universe of God.

Sermon XXVI.—Christ weeping over Jerusalem.

"And when he came near, he beheld the city, and wept over it" (Luke xix. 41).

That, although Jesus wept, no laugh or smile was ever seen upon his countenance, is a mere fiction of the fathers; or rather, perhaps, to characterise it less harshly, was

nothing more than an inference, a hasty inference, showing a gloomy bias in the minds by which it was deduced; and one which is very far from being borne out by the gospel history. It is not proved by the silence of the evangelists as to the actual fact, or as to any particular instance of his betraying that natural symptom of mirth or cheerfulness; and there are many opposing circumstances which stamp such an assertion with a considerable degree of improbability. If silence were proof, it would prove as much of many other, of most other, of the characters of sacred history: we should be compelled to think them, what it is evident they were not, a melancholy and despairing race of beings; and to believe that the first Christians at conversion, instead of going on their way rejoicing, were left lamenting. The history is silent, like other histories, on this particular, because it relates chiefly, and almost wholly, to their seasons of public exertion, rather than to those of private relaxation and enjoyment. As silence is not proof, so, if not disproof, there is yet a strong contrary presumption in the character of Jesus, which, notwithstanding the arduousness of his work, the severity of his trials, and the bitterness of his sufferings, had evidently many cheerful and social qualities. Of this the calumnies against him are evidence; for though calumny be falsehood, yet it usually takes some colouring of truth to give it plausibility and currency. These calumnies we have on his own authority (Matt. xi. 18, 19): "For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, He hath a demon. The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, Behold a man gluttonous and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners. But wisdom is justified of her children." However false and however malicious were the imputations here insinuated, they were not the imputations which falsehood and malice themselves would seek to fix on a man who was distinguished by having never smiled in his life. Many situations in which we find Jesus in the course of the narrative, as at the marriage of Cana, and the tables of Levi, of Lazarus, of the censorious Pharisee, &c., corroborate the conclusion that he was naturally of a cheerful, if not a joyous, temperament; and that he indulged this so far as the holiest of mankind could, when engaged on the most momentous and awful undertaking. But this

disposition had in him none of those concomitants which are sometimes unhappily blended with it,—of heartlessness, deficient sympathy with the sorrowful, and recklessness or blunted feeling about private or public evils. It coexisted with, or, more properly, it sprang from, the keenest sensibility. It was only one demonstration of a quickness of feeling as to whatever inspires pleasure or produces pain in sentient beings; the source alike of tears and smiles; and which, in opposite circumstances, more frequent in his public ministry, elicited the strongest symptoms of the deepest emotions of a sympathising and wounded spirit. Of this, too, we have the evidence afforded by the general development of his character in the pages of the evangelists. We have also the proof of particular instances—instances which are minutely recorded.

On two occasions, especially, we are informed that Jesus wept; the one a case of private, the other of public calamity. The first was at the grave of Lazarus—of Lazarus, his personal and intimate friend, in whose house he had abode, and with whom he had taken sweet counsel; of Lazarus, whom he loved, and *his* affection was of no ordinary strength; whose sisters were looking up to him in all the first helplessness and agony of bereavement; and for whom many voices were raising the wail of lamentation over a lost benefactor; that wail which, proclaiming the worth of the blessing that is gone, though it may be at last balm for the mourner's wounded soul, at first deepens and aggravates the smart to intensity. Then he wept; wept though he knew that Lazarus was about to rise, though his prayer was heard and granted for the aid of Omnipotence, though he was advancing towards the spot where he should pronounce the wondrous command to the dead, "Come forth," and where the dead heard and obeyed that command, and "came forth."

The other occasion sprang out of this. Lazarus had been raised; the fame of the miracle had gone abroad; the feast of the passover was close at hand; Jesus had fulfilled his personal ministry; there remained to the Jewish nation but the choice of his solemn acceptance as the Messiah, or his rejection; he avowed his pretensions to that character; he approached Jerusalem sitting on an ass's colt, in the simple state of her ancient sovereigns; an immense multi-

tude attended his progress; they descended the Mount of Olives; and there lay Jerusalem before them in all her extent, her beauty, and her pride; her white towers and palaces glittering in the sun; the city of God, with his peerless temple majestically rising above all other buildings, as if awaiting and looking for the coming of the Messenger of Jehovah's covenant, to give it a holier consecration, and kindle in its empty ark a brighter glory of the Lord; and then the popular enthusiasm burst forth like a torrent; and palm-branches were snatched, and waved around, and strewn in the path of the lowly, but then triumphant prophet; and the acclamation resounded to all the hills of Zion, "Blessed be the king that cometh in the name of the Lord; peace in heaven, and glory in the highest!" And so rolled on that beautiful pageant; beautiful, but, oh, how brief! for the storm was up which should scatter it abroad, and the clouds were brooding that should wrap it in a pall of blackest darkness.

He, around whose head these evanescent glories shone, was weeping. "And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong to thy peace! But now they are hid from thine eyes. For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, and shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation;" and by such anticipations well might the compassionate Jesus be moved even to tears.

If it be allowed us cautiously and reverently to endeavour to penetrate into the recesses of the Saviour's mind; guided by the authentic and faithful record of the evangelists, to trace and analyse the workings of his heart,—and what nobler or more useful study is there than that of the human heart? and where can that be studied, in all the perfection of which it is capable, but in him?—I think we may not unwarrantably conclude that, though a fraternal and commiserating grief was the only emotion expressed by him on this occasion, it was not the only one which he felt. The acquaintance which the gospels give us with his feelings and disposition, together with the view of

Jerusalem, which affected him, and the peculiar circumstances in which he now beheld that city, direct us to other sensations which most probably passed through his mind before and after those of which we have the recorded expressions. In conformity with the principle of association, with the ordinary laws of the human mind, and in conformity also with his known history and character, three distinct trains of thought would be awakened in him, as from the brow of the Mount of Olives he gazed on that famed metropolis: its sight would be associated with a swelling catalogue of criminality; with a fearful anticipation of impending miseries; and with the perception of both working out a variety of blessings for mankind at large. And in like succession with these several trains of thought would come the distinct and appropriate emotion of each, the first being indignation, which would be followed by a tender pity, and that would subside into, and be succeeded by, a holy calm, a peaceful and unruffled confidence in God, who orders all things well.

The first sight of Jerusalem would excite in him thoughts which rouse to indignation; I mean, such a feeling as he displayed, on various occasions, in those stern rebukes, which, even to readers, if such there be, who dwell where no similar vices and corruptions are known, roll fearfully on the page as "the sound of thunder heard remote." In that chosen city of God, how often had blazed the altars of the foulest idolatry! When that evil ceased, how perverted had been the law of which it was the professed sanctuary, by the intermixture of absurd traditions, and a forced accommodation to the interests and passions of its expositors! Even now, within the courts of the temple, was traffic counting its gains out of the great national sacrifice, and making the house of prayer a den of thieves. To his eyes the stain of righteous blood was on those glittering walls; for she had persecuted till it seemed she had a monopoly of cruelty, and all other cities were cities of refuge to God's servants, and the bitter question could be asked, "Can it be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem?" And there, in the plenitude of their authority and influence, were the hypocritical Pharisees, who made long prayers and plundered the widow and the orphan. And there were the licentious Sadducees, faring sumptuously, and unheed-

ing alike the commands of God above them, and the miseries of the beggar at their gates. There were the rulers, hesitating between the secret assassination and the public execution of the Son of God. And there the fickle multitude, of whom too many would, in one short week, exchange the shout of "Hosanna," for "Crucify him, crucify him!" There were preparing the treachery, the perjury, the mockery, and all the unutterable guilt of that dreadful night in the halls of Pilate and Caiaphas. Out of that gate would they lead him, the scorned Messenger of their salvation, "as a lamb to the slaughter." There would insult, oppression, and savage, unrelenting persecution, revel on the groans and blood of his innocent followers, till the measure of their iniquities was brimmed and overflowing. And there would mutual dissensions and hatred and all foul passions, let loose as for their carnival, perpetrate such deeds as nature sickens at, till even Roman scepticism wondered that Providence swept not the abandoned horde from the polluted surface of the earth. And knowing all this, as history, experience, prophecy, must have brought it all home to his mind, could he look on those gay abodes and proud fortresses of crime without a flush of indignation; a feeling that Jerusalem ought to be a devoted city trodden down of the Gentiles; that she deserved the sentence he was commissioned to pronounce—the sentence of total destruction, Heaven's merited but awful malediction?

Rapidly passed these images of guilt from the Saviour's mind, and these stern emotions from his compassionate heart. A set of gentler and more congenial associations came flowing on; thoughts endearing and regretful, till the sight of that gorgeous prospect became dim and misty through the tears it called up. There was it that through successive generations righteous men had worshiped the God of righteousness, and compassed his altar, washing their hands in innocency. Thence had gone forth the oracles of God, declaring his truth, power, and mercy in a voice which shall be heard wherever there is speech or language. In those streets had wisdom cried aloud; and from those courts had the choral psalm ascended to that heaven from which came its own more than poetic inspiration. There had the distressed and the bereaved "cried unto the Lord, and he heard them, and delivered them out

of all their troubles." There the penitent smote his breast, seeking God's mercy to sinners, and thence had he gone down to his home full of consolation and peace. Thither had the tribes gone up, from the remotest corners of the land, with music and holy song, thronging together for their great national festival—the commemoration of their deliverance of old. Thither had Jesus himself been carried when a child; there tarried when a youth; there resorted when a man; there felt the purest social pleasure, the harmonious intercourse with minds of kindred feeling and piety; there enjoyed religion's noblest delight, of exalted communings with his Father, God; there received and obeyed divine impulses to bear witness to the truth; there taught the people and healed the sick; and there should thousands come through him to the Father, to the light and salvation of their souls; and there was now the universal Jewish nation assembling, full of life, of activity, of the anxious search and fond hope of happiness; and he foresaw the splendid scene of these associations made a hissing and a byword to the earth; and a mad infatuation bearing all along to condemnation and the extreme of wretchedness; and every disregarded warning fully realised; and famine raging in those streets till the mother devoured her babe; and the Roman sword drunk with slaughter; and the flames bursting forth as if the city were become one great volcano; and the ploughshare passing over all, and leaving it in the unbroken solitude of desolation; and "he wept."

The mind of him who was in the bosom of the Father, who knew the things of heaven, the Messenger of the Almighty's great counsel, in whom God dwelt by his spirit of knowledge, wisdom, and judgment, could not long rest in contemplations such as these. Of the seed of Abraham, but the brother of mankind, he would look beyond Jewish guilt and suffering, to the mighty results which these were subservient to, in the plan of Providence and the events of futurity, for the universal benefit and blessing of the human race. There would come a third set of thoughts, restoring his soul to its wonted calmness and confidence in God, and to complacency in his righteous and merciful dispensations. He would advert to the necessity of his own public death, which involved that of his rejection by the Jews and their

malignity; to the demonstration, by the fact of his resurrection, of the doctrine of man's immortality; to the dependence of the evidence of this fact, for its conclusiveness, on the absence of all suspicion of collusion on the part of the Jewish authorities, and the prodigious increase of its strength by their decided and infuriate opposition; to the way in which the scattering abroad of his disciples by persecution would send the gospel with them in their dispersion, and cause its proclamation to all the nations of the earth; and to the connection of the solemn and conspicuous abrogation of the Mosaic polity by Providence, with the establishment of that better kingdom in which God is known and adored as the universal Father; penitence, sincerity, and purity of heart are held forth as the only essentials; and men are taught to love one another as brethren, and rejoice in the glorious hope that ultimately "God will be all in all." And while he thus meditated, as indignation had melted into an agonising pity, that would give way to admiration of Him who brings light out of darkness; whose judgments are a mighty deep, an abyss not only of wisdom, but of love; whose glory is the end of all beings and events, and that glory his creatures' good. And in that profound serenity which springs from unbounded confidence in Him, would he move onwards to his allotted task, to his needful suffering, to his promised glory.

And why have I thus endeavoured to trace the succession of his feelings, but that by them we should regulate our own? The course delineated is that which the good man's emotions should commonly take; and which it is best for his character, best for his happiness, best for his usefulness, when they do take. As the world goes, we cannot avoid sometimes experiencing or observing conduct which renders us indignant; but it will be our duty and our wisdom speedily to modify that feeling; to constrain ourselves to dwell on other views of the offensive picture, which will call up the native kindliness of humanity; to cherish this into the gospel feeling, charity; and never to forget that there is no chance in the world, but that all things, even the most mysterious and most disgusting, as well as the brightest and noblest, work together for good, under the direction of almighty beneficence.

Whether it be allowable, within any limits, to indulge

anger, is a question foreign to our present concern; for however that may be, sometimes to feel it is a necessity of our nature, and one which extends even to the holiest, most pious, and most benevolent of our race. There are times when the good man must feel it, because he *is* good, and when not to have felt it, though it should be suppressed the instant after, would rather show like culpable indifference than Christian perfection. When oppression traffics in human labour and human life; when it buys, when it steals, men, and pitilessly turns upon them its iron screw, squeezing from flesh, blood, and bone the last drop which in any form may have an exchangeable value in the market,—is not the good man indignant? When ambition practises the monstrous doctrine of millions made for individuals, their playthings, to be demolished at their caprice, sporting wantonly with the rights, the peace, the comforts, the existence of nations, as if their intoxicated pride would, if possible, make God's earth itself their football,—is not the good man indignant? When hypocrisy makes religion the handmaid of all base arts and purposes,—of public corruption and private gain; using its profession as a cloak for tyranny or rapacity; fomenting the blind bigotry that divides nations, neighbours, and households; and in its sacred name checking the advance of knowledge, repressing the independence of thought, and terrifying from freedom of action,—is not the good man indignant? When fraud spreads its nets for the ignorant and the unwary, and plunders whoever may be defenceless, and includes all iniquity which is legal in the practical definition of its morality, and fawns on those who are *to be* despoiled, and insults those who *are* despoiled,—is not the good man indignant? When selfishness pursues its own gross indulgences, careless of others' claims, comforts, or reputation; leaping to its own gratification, with proud recklessness or utter heartlessness as to the pain it may inflict, or the injuries it may commit,—is not the good man indignant? And is he not indignant when ingratitude cancels in an hour the kindness of years, consigns a friendship yet living to the grave of oblivion, and trampling on it there, takes that stand as a vantage-ground from which to assail and strike and wound the objects of its unnatural hostility? And yet at these, or whatever there may be else or more belonging to the worst things of the world, though indig-

nation may be the first emotion, with the Christian it must not be the final, the only emotion. The same mind should be in him that was in Christ, and his feelings should follow the succession and the order of his Master's. His anger must yield to commiseration. Even the Psalmist's soul mourned in secret places for men's pride and wickedness, and rivers of tears ran down his eyes because men kept not God's law. Yes, the wicked are to be pitied. Their condition and their prospects deserve the tears of those whose religion teaches never to forget their identity of nature, nor disregard its claims to fraternal tenderness. Think of the source of their vices. They have made a gross mistake, a fearfully false calculation, and they are its victims. They have the same end with the righteous, with all sentient beings,—for all seek happiness; but they seek it wrongly in proportion to their ignorance of that in which alone it really consists. They have all an interest in the prayer, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Think of the misery of their vices; for vice is but another name for that which causes suffering: they are indissolubly linked together by the hand that binds the planets to the sun, and earth's surface to its centre. "There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked;" and though the tongue may deny, the heart of man has never yet falsified the words of God. Vicious passions are wretched in their disappointment, wretched in their gratification, wretched even in their very exercise. They are jarring movements in that human instrument where only benignant feelings play harmoniously. Think of the results of their vices to others; for such are the combinations of Providence, that by the loathsome and miserable drudgery of the slaves of vice, the righteous, the world, are benefited even here. Annas, and Caiaphas, and Pilate, and Judas, by their time-serving and avarice and malignity, only cursed themselves that others might be blessed, and perpetrated the needful wickedness to the accomplishment of man's redemption. Thus vice develops virtue; and so multiplies a happiness to which its own is sacrificed. Think of the capabilities which remain amidst all their vices. How goodly is the temple of humanity even when desecrated and in ruins, and though every foul creature have there made its nest and dwelling-place! How many traces of the innocence of infancy, sullied, yet not destroyed! How

many outbreakings of good across the deepest gloom of their depravity!—brief as the lightning it may be, but as bright. Faculties, dispositions, frequent actions, all disarm our sterner feelings, speak to our hearts of what they might have been, and make us melancholy at the sight of what they are. And "who maketh thee to differ from another, or what hast thou that thou didst not receive?" Answer that question, man, when more inclined to condemn than to pity thy most sinful brother-man. Think, too, of the punishment of their vices, remedial though it be; of the long and dreary path of shame which lies before them in another world; of the heavy burden they must bear along that seemingly interminable road; of the quenchless fire and gnawing worm in their bosoms, while for their food or fuel is left one spot of corruption there; and then say if the good man must not soon forget to be indignant in the fulness of his commiseration?

Nor pause here, Christian, in thought or feeling; for these should but remind thee of God, in whom we all live and move and have our being. He is not surprised by vice into indignation; he is not moved by suffering to regret; and why not? Because there is, under his reign there can only be, so much of evil as will augment the final sum of universal good. This is the plan of his Providence. This is the counsel that shall stand for ever. Not a hair's breadth beyond that line can sin or suffering advance their banners. Wherever mind or heart may wander, hither let them fly when exhausted, and repose in Christian faith, in filial confidence. The Omnipotent Father must and will do not only that which is right, but that which is best—ultimately best for all. Amid the turmoil of the world, he lifts up the light of his countenance upon us, and gives us peace.

Serenity is not sloth. If the mind of Jesus traversed this course from agitation to pious calmness, he did not brood over emotions to the neglect of energetic exertion. His time was short, and he crowded it with deeds. Soon was he in Jerusalem, in the temple, in the dignity of a reformer rebuking its profaners, with the wisdom of a prophet teaching the people. And if you have disgust at vice, compassion for suffering, and faith in God, you have them that they may impel you to a righteous and beneficent activity,

alleviating the evils which you lament, and glorifying the God whom you adore.

Sermon XXVII.—The Coming of the Son of Man.

"Therefore be ye also ready; for in such an hour as ye think not, the Son of Man cometh" (Matt. xxiv. 44).

The original reference of the text clearly was to the destruction of Jerusalem. It requires a strong mental effort in the modern reader to appreciate the immense importance attached to that event by the writers of the New Testament, and by those whose language they recorded. The dissolution of the Jewish polity is spoken of in terms which we apply to, and which seem to designate, the dissolution of the material universe itself. That judgment on the disobedient children of Abraham is described as we describe the final judgment on all the children of Adam. And to that belongs, with very few exceptions, the scriptural phrase of the coming of Christ, or of the Son of Man. He came, then, in the vindication of his mission, the completion of his kingdom, the destruction of his enemies, and the abolition of that system of ceremony and exclusiveness which was established as an introduction, but had by perversion become the great obstacle, to the prevalence of the religion of Christ, which, by its charity, simplicity, and universality, is glad tidings of great joy to all nations. For this his disciples were to watch and "be ready." It was an era of Christian salvation upon earth. They were instructed to observe the signs of its approach, prophetically described in this chapter, and at the appointed time withdraw the body of believers from a scene devoted to desolation. It was the period during which miraculous power was intrusted to them, of which, and of their general fidelity to their Master's cause, they would have to render an account. It was the close of that dispensation, the end of that world or age, to which the promise of Christ related. It came; and the train of God's preternatural dealings with man was complete; the world had the Bible, a perfect whole, to improve by, live by, and be judged by.

But the application of the text to individual death, though an accommodation, is a natural, easy, and allowable

one. The language of Christ is correctly and strikingly descriptive of our state and our duty with reference to the great change which awaits us.

The absolute certainty of death, the complete uncertainty of the time and mode of its occurrence, and the consequent desirableness of an habitual state of preparation, are very trite topics of pulpit discussion: and why are they so? For two reasons, each of which is sufficiently melancholy, and which in their combination form a powerful inducement, notwithstanding the triteness of the topic, incessantly to introduce and earnestly to urge it on your attention. They are, first, the frequency of the instances in which the death of individuals, after all our similar experience, yet affects us with surprise. No man can look around, from time to time, on such a congregation as this, and think of the number that, according to established probability, will in any given period cease to exist on the earth, without feeling also, when that period has revolved, how utterly the facts baffle all his anticipations. The number will scarcely fail of being about what he expected. The surprise is not there. The ratio of mortality is matter of calculation, and the results may be commonly known, and have a high degree of accuracy. But if he presume that the individuals will be either the oldest or the most infirm, or those who may then be in the most dangerous situations, the event will continually remind him of the futility of his speculations. He will miss the young, and see the aged surviving to mourn them. He will behold the sick yet lingering or reviving, and the place empty of those who were then the healthiest. Within the sound of many a church-bell lingers some poor, bedridden creature, oppressed with the accumulated ills of age, disease, and poverty; numbering weary hours, and days, and weeks, and months: and still, as she asks for whom that knell is tolling, the reply names one and another of those who, since sentence went out against her, and death was written legibly on her forehead, and the execution of the doom seemed actually commenced, were tilting along in their career of pleasure, business, or ambition; full of health, and strength, and enjoyment, and hope; and "living as if earth contained no tomb." Take your station by the churchyard, and ask concerning those who are brought

thither to their last abode, if you need a practical demonstration of the uncertainty of death. Or rather, take it in an assembly of the living, such as this, where, as from a watch-tower, one may mark how the ranks of life are thinned, and who they are that fall. But while this uncertainty often produces surprise, there is another fact which would always surprise (the second reason to which I referred), if that emotion were not incompatible with commonness, and could be repeatedly excited merely by irrationality and incongruity; I mean, the prevailing, practical disregard of such monitions; the absence or the evanescent duration of the impression which they were adapted to make; the going on as if the healthy were privileged from at least mortal disease, the young secure of living to be old, and the completion certain with us of that circle which is so continually broken before our eyes. What can be done, then, but to reiterate, however vainly, the same obvious but unheeded truth, and with each closing grave over an unexpected victim, to repeat the admonition, "Be ye also ready; for in such an hour as ye think not, the Son of Man cometh"?

Death may be called the coming of the Son of Man, as it is the destiny of that nature of which he was the noblest partaker, and, as it were, the universal representative.

Jesus Christ was raised up by Heaven as an exhibition to the world of perfect humanity. The evangelic record is a lesson to which Providence points the attention of mankind in all succeeding ages, as showing what once a man was, and did, and suffered, and attained. The appellation which he adopted, his self-given and favourite title, Son of Man, intimates this identification with mankind. I do not call this the whole and sole object of his mission; but it was one very important object of that mission, one which displays the wisdom and benignity of God, and which is rich in instruction, comfort, and hope to us. His virtues were the virtues of a son of man, to show how capable humanity is of resisting temptation, and quelling selfishness, and acting on the purest motives, and making the history of a life an embodying, a practical demonstration, of the strictest principles of purity, justice, and benevolence. His suffering was the suffering of a son of man, to show how humanity, in the duty of devotion to a good cause,

may bear up against opposition and disappointment and cruel persecution, and be strong in faith, and rich in the assurance of God's love, and overcome all rebellings in the bosom by fervent prayer. His glory was the glory of a son of man, to show what the Author of humanity has prepared as the final condition of the work of his hands, so that although in the present state it can but imperfectly appear what we shall be, we may yet have this general idea, that "we shall be like him." And thus even that best son of man died, showing that death is the irreversible and universal lot of humanity, that there is no remission of that sentence for the greatest or the holiest or the most enduring of mankind. His dying was one link in the bond of brotherhood which binds him to us, and gives us an interest in all he was; and thus even the severing grave, which for a time parts from the activity of earth, and the love of friends, and the light of day, but makes us one in, and with, Jesus Christ. If he died, we must; as he died, we should not be unwilling to follow, nor repine to relinquish those whose grave is ab ed of repose which he hath blessed.

Death is the coming of the Son of Man; for then, if reflection and remembrance be allowed, what is known of his teachings will recur forcibly to the mind.

Recollections throng around the couch of prolonged and hopeless sickness. There is then no earthly futurity to dazzle the mind by bright, or agitate it with stormy, visions. The present seems scarcely to exist. Only the echo of the world's din reaches the ear, and that sounds very faintly. The great blazing orb of life is contracted to a small, dull circle; but the past comes back upon the mind. Dead thoughts live again; and torpid feelings rouse from their slumbers, and make their voice heard. While actively engaged, remembrance sinks before reality; thought is as nothing in comparison with action. Sickness reverses their relative positions, dimensions, and power. The sufferer, scarcely living in the present, lives the past over again. The overwhelming pressure of that which is without being removed, that which is within plays freely, and memory creates her world anew, and recalls to being those who peopled it. The emotions of other days and years are in the heart; their sights are before the eyes; their sounds are

ringing on the ears; and amid them is heard the voice of the Son of Man, the preacher of righteousness and mercy. The teachings of Christ, familiarised as they are, in some degree, to almost every one, either incidentally or directly, by private reading, public services, or their intermixture with that common stock, that universal public heritage of knowledge, which is as a mental atmosphere in which our souls breathe; and rich as they are in simplicity, terseness, beauty, truth, pathos, and every quality which, when they have been once admitted into the mind, tends to fix them there,—cannot but recur and be heard, when so many other sounds are hushed in the stillness which pervades the antechamber of death. They *will* be heard. Their voice will be, to the active opponent of goodness, like that which struck the zealot to the ground on the road to Damascus, demanding, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" The careless disregarder of what most concerned him, will hear them as the plaintive lamentation of wounded affection: "Oh, that thou hadst known, even thou, in this thy day, the things which belong to thy peace!" To the mind that almost faints in well-doing, they will resound in animating tones, "Be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee;" "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." On the ear of incorrigible and abandoned hypocrisy, they will peal like the thunder of doom, "Depart from me, all ye that work iniquity; I never knew you." While soothing as the first air of heaven's eternal spring they will whisper to the meek, consistent disciple, "Ye believe in God, believe also in me. Let not your heart be troubled."

Death is the coming of the Son of Man, as it is the close of our mortal account, the commencement of our great reckoning, and of that retribution which he proclaimed.

This idea is prominent in the series of parables which conclude the chapter from which the text is taken, and continue through the next. The disciples are reminded that they were as servants responsible to a master, or as subjects to a sovereign, and might at any moment be summoned to give account of what had, for a specific purpose, been intrusted to their charge. Such is our condition. We learn from Christ that our probation endures through life, and ends at death, and that in the grave we shall hear his voice and come forth: if we have done good, to the resurrection

of life; and if we have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation. According to the principles of his gospel shall we be tried; perhaps by him personally, as the minister of the omniscient God, the righteous universal judge. In death, then, he comes to us for judgment. May he find us doing the work of faithful servants, and doing it with our might!

Death is the coming of the Son of Man, for it is the harbinger of that resurrection which is promised to all men, and was in him exemplified.

We die to become immortal. Death is the commencement of a change of which the resurrection is the completion. They are parts of one process, the whole of which is the transformation of a being of few days into one of eternal ages. Whether this process be natural or miraculous; whether it take place imperceptibly in individuals successively, as they expire, or at some future period on the whole human race at once, are questions of some difficulty. However that may be, in Christ we have the fact exhibited of what death is. There is its connection with revival. It is as if there were a number of new-created beings, who knew not what sleep was, and who became alarmed as one after another of them sunk down in slumber; and an angel should arouse one, to show the rest, by his example, that it was but a temporary suspension of the faculties, to reinvigorate them for exertion and enjoyment. When God raised Christ, and showed him openly, he gave the world such a practical instruction on the nature of death. That event comes not to us as it came to those for whom life and immortality had not been brought to light by the gospel. To them death seemed a whole, complete in itself, a final event; or at best they must have deemed its consequences but mysterious and conjectural: to us death is not a whole, not complete in itself, not final; it is the preparatory portion of a glorious change; it is the beginning of an immortalising operation of Divine power upon us; it is the coming of Christ, who, in his own person, demonstrated the fact of this change. The coming of death, changed by him from foe to friend, is *his* coming, to acknowledge as brethren for immortality those whose brotherhood he ever avowed in his days of flesh and tears.

Death is the coming of the Son of Man, as it will admit his disciples to his presence and society.

An apostolic description of dying is, "departing, and being with Christ." Whether our revival, our resurrection, be immediate or remote, we shall revive to be in his presence, if here we have acted according to the dictates of his religion. In person there, as by his word here, we may expect him to be the head and guide of his people; and is not this alone worth dying for? Did not his apostles feel, to their very last gasp, while sense and memory remained, that in that short companionship of the few months of his public ministry they had enjoyed a privilege which the most favoured kings and prophets of their nation would have sacrificed years of their existence to purchase? The depth and extent of his wisdom, the perfection of his character, his unutterable benevolence and condescension,—these must make it blessed to be near him; and death brings us to him. Were such a being known to exist on earth, known for what he really was, and that beyond doubt as the gospels have made him known to us, in whatever remote country he abode, thither would the really wise and good of all nations direct their eyes, and strive to make their pilgrimage, and think their time and toil most amply recompensed. For us that pilgrimage is but across the narrow stream of death; we reach him easily; or rather, by death he comes to us, and takes us to himself, that we may be with him, where he is, and see and partake the glory which his Father hath given him.

Death is the coming of the Son of Man, for it tends to the realisation of the happiness to which he was sent to guide us.

He is our forerunner—the leader of many sons to glory. His mission was to tell of heaven, and mark and tread the path for us to follow in. To be freed from all the cares and sufferings of life, its pangs, bitter to be felt, and its burdens, heavy to be borne; to be emancipated from all the ills inflicted upon us by others, by malignant opposition or misguided kindness, by the jostling of the selfish or the deceit of the false-hearted; by ourselves, often our own worst enemies and direst tormentors, reckless authors of bodily and mental anguish, and forgers of those chains of habit which bind when they have ceased to glitter on the eye, and their tinkling no longer is music to the ear; by the condition of our nature, the evils which flesh is heir to,

which cling to this breathing clay, till they again resolve it into its unconscious elements; to become eternal beings, defying all ages to terminate our existence, or enfeeble our powers, or impair our enjoyments; to join the great and glorious assembly of the good, the multitude which no man can number of God's redeemed, and fold friends, parents, children, in the embrace of everlasting reunion; to hold filial communion with the Father of our spirits, the Infinite Fountain of life and felicity, and receive from his smile and blessing unfailing supplies of gladness for evermore: these are the heaven of the Son of Man's discovery and promise; to reveal them he came into the world; in their possession he comes to us and abides with us.

This view of death is fraught with consolation. There is little in it to lament, even for those most dear to us; and that little is overbalanced by a multitude of considerations which, for them at least, if not for ourselves, are full of joyousness. It is no matter of surprise or incurable grief that they have submitted to the universal lot, from which even the Son of God was not exempt. It is no matter of lamentation that their earthly account is closed, however early or abruptly, if their hearts and lives were right with God, and after years would rather have brought increased peril than augmented hope. It is no matter of lamentation that in them the change is already begun which transforms from corruption to incorruption, from weakness to power, from dishonour to glory. It is no matter of lamentation that they are gone to a world of holy and happy beings, to the kingdom of Christ, to the presence of God. There may yet be sorrow; but that sorrow would be sin in the Christian if he sorrowed as those who are without hope.

This view of death intimates the nature of the requisite preparation for it. If we would have death rightly described as the coming of Christ to us,—coming unto him, mentally and morally, should rightly describe our lives. They should be a continued approach to the purity of his spirit, the fervency of his devotion, the depth of his resignation, and the activity of his benevolence. There is no better, there is no other, readiness than this. The servant who faithfully discharges his duty is ready, and always, for his Lord's coming; not he who is absorbed in idle specula-

tions, or fruitless feelings, or wholly intent on his own gratification. It is in this way only that the oldest can be prepared; and in this way the young may be equally prepared. They are ready, in the remembrance of their Creator in their youthful days, in the love of his word and worship, in the humble and diligent pursuit of their own improvement, growing in grace and in knowledge; in the deeds and dispositions which make them objects of attachment in the families to which they belong, of respect and regard to others, and of gratitude to those among whom circumstances enable them to appear in the delightful character of benefactors. Thus qualified, what more of consolation in their loss could added years have given, even to the anguish of a parent's heart, or what more impressive lesson to youthful relatives and friends, mourning the unexpected and rapid stroke which laid low the desire of their eyes?

What, my young friends, is your first concern, thus warned of the utter uncertainty of life, thus shown the only availing readiness for death, which makes that uncertainty of comparative unimportance? The uncertainty would be terrible if preparation consisted in some particular act. It has no terror, regarding that preparation as merely those right feelings and habits, the formation of which is our duty, our interest, our happiness; and which constitute readiness at any and every moment; which are enough, whether death comes in youth or age, by instant accident or after repeated warnings through many years, preceded by the illness of long, lingering months, or only of a few short days. Your path is as plain as the close is bright; and tending heavenward, in the course of duty, whither ye go ye know, and the way ye know. Through life you will come unto the Saviour by faith, hope, love, and humble imitation; and death will be to you the friendly and blessed coming of the Son of Man.

Sermon XXVIII.—Christ not of the World.

"Even as I am not of the world" (John xvii. 16).

The expression, "a man of the world," is sometimes used for the purpose of praise, and sometimes for that of censure. In the former application, it denotes one who has had opportunities of observing and mixing with society in its different gradations, and especially in its higher ranks, and who has availed himself of those opportunities to enlarge his views, to quicken his insight into character, to polish his manners, and to accommodate himself to national or individual diversities; one who is alive to the perception of fraud or folly, but, content in his security and superiority, does not mark offensively his detection of either; and who is called "a man of the world" to denote the school in which he has studied, the sources from which his knowledge has been derived, the sphere in which his faculties have been exercised; to oppose him to the man of books only, the mere pedant, who studies human nature at second-hand in the volumes of philosophers and historians, leaving unnoted the great page of human life, the exhibition of principles, interests, and passions, in their multifarious conflicts and combinations. A man of the world, in this sense, whether he have become so by the preference of taste or the influence of circumstances, is assuredly no object of censure; it would be difficult even to make out the superiority over him of the secluded student; and his qualities and acquirements are capable of no incongruous mixture with useful learning and with moral and religious principle.

But they are also capable of an admixture of a very different kind, which is perhaps, unhappily, more common; and this leads us to the application of the phrase as expressive of censure, of decided moral disapprobation. When thus employed, it designates one to whom this world is all; its honours or pleasures the highest and the sole object of his desires; its prevalent opinions the only rule of morality about which he cares; who observes just as much outward decency as society demands, combining it with as much relaxation of principle as society allows; and who applies his powers of pleasing, and his knowledge of human nature, especially its weaknesses, to the accomplishment of

his selfish purposes. Such a man prospers usually in the world, and is a favourite with the world: the world loveth its own, and he is of the world.

The objects which the world presents, and the morality which the world requires, have been much better at some times, and in some countries, than in others. The tide has been higher or lower: but this can make no material difference in the worth of those who have been floating with or swimming against the stream; who have been of the world, or not of the world. The latter is the Christian character,—I should rather say, includes the Christian character; for a man may be not of the world, and yet not of Christ either; though he cannot be of Christ without being not of the world; that is, without having a much nobler object in view than this world can possibly furnish; acting under the impulse of nobler motives than present things afford; and cherishing, as his habitual emotions, as his spiritual life, more pure, delicate, generous and exalted feelings, than reside in the bosoms of those whose hearts have their home in the fashion of a world that passeth away.

Many of the particulars in which Christ, our great exemplar, was not of the world, relate to the peculiarities of his divine mission; but it is not needful to separate these from what belong to circumstances analogous to our own, and common to human nature, because they alike serve to develop and illustrate the spirit of his own character, and that of his religion.

What a contrast does Jesus afford to the Jews who, at intervals, from his time to a comparatively recent period, have advanced pretensions to his character of the Messiah! Between twenty and thirty of these, perhaps more, are enumerated by ecclesiastical historians. They have followed one another in the same course. They sought worldly power; they relied on worldly policy. They reversed his declaration. Their kingdom was of this world, and their servants fought. They used and they perished by the sword. Yet still another and another followed. He remains alone in the noble conception of a spiritual kingdom, whose throne is the human heart; whose weapons are reason and persuasion; whose law is love; whose sanctions are the powers of the world to come; and whose aim is the regeneration and perfection of the human character.

What a magnificent thought to be generated in the mind of a Galilean peasant! This must be inspiration. What a prodigy to be realised, as its first earthly cause, by the discourses which he delivered in his brief sojourn among the towns and villages of Judea! This must be miracle. Neither the thought nor the accomplishment was of the world. No; that placid, benignant eloquence, which falls on the heart like the showers of spring on the earth, making the wilderness of savage passion, and the solitary place of a bosom abandoned by all good feelings, to be glad in the establishment of heaven's order and the multiplication of heaven's blessings, and even the desert of despair to rejoice and blossom as the rose, must have had an origin above the world; it breathes the spirit of God.

There is another contrast between him and pretenders to a divine commission authenticated by miracles, in the manner in which he wrought and regarded his miracles. On proper occasions, he appealed to them as proofs of his divine commission; and their bearing on this point was clear and full in his mind. But there was something else in his heart, which shows the fervent benevolence of that heart, and attracts towards him our fervent affection; and that is, that his interest appears much less intense as to their argumentative force than in their beneficent operations. In a less unworldly mind, such a work as raising the dead would have been heralded and accompanied and followed by thoughts of its mighty demonstration of the reality of his supernatural claims: while his thoughts were brooding over the delight of the restoration of his daughter to the centurion; of her only son to the widow of Nain; of their brother to the sisters of Lazarus. His miraculous power was not so immediately precious to his heart because it would destroy error, as because it did alleviate sorrow; because it should finally prove truth, as because it did promptly produce happiness. He would never have said, like Moses to the fainting Israelites in the wilderness, "Hear now, ye rebels; must we bring you water out of this rock?" Not in anger would his rod have struck the rock; and the rich stream it sent forth to supply their wants would have but faintly emblemed that deep well of human feeling in his bosom whence gushed forth a richer stream of kindness and compassion. Generous and gracious

being! how does the kindness of his heart shine above even the greatness of his office! With what magnanimity of affection does he wield the power of miracles, and show himself greater as the man than as the Messiah!

He was not of the world: see how he treated the world. There was one of its great ones came to him by night; and he rebuked that "ruler of the Jews," and censured his timidity, and disregarded his patronage, and admonished him to learn, and demanded of him manliness and consistency, if he would see the kingdom of heaven. See how he treated the world: there was one of its outcasts, who sought him not, but whose path he crossed, and whose penitence he marked, and whose soul he saved; and when she blessed him, he did not frown; and when her gratitude, with trembling boldness, followed him to the rich man's table, and she anointed his feet with ointment and wiped them with her hair, amid a throng of scandalised and sneering hypocrites, he rolled back upon their own heads the tide of reproach and contempt with which the Pharisees thought to overwhelm him, his convert, and his cause, leaving them prostrate and confounded before the insulted dignity of his pure and beneficent character.

The people sought to take him by force and make him a king. He fed their hunger, healed their sick, and retired from their solicitations to hold communion with his God in the mountain solitude. The Pharisees possessed public veneration, guided public opinion, wielded public fury. He arraigned them on their spiritual thrones, where they judged the tribes of Israel, that awful Sanhedrim; he denounced their ostentatious devotions; he spoke at once of the long prayers they made, and the widows' houses they plundered; he laid bare their hidden iniquity, and he prophesied their coming destruction. He stood, defenceless and alone, before the corrupt and time-serving Pilate, the wantonly tyrannical Herod, the malignant and vindictive Caiaphas; amid a relentless priesthood, an insolent soldiery, and an infuriated multitude; alone and defenceless, but neither raging nor cringing; calm in the uncompromising majesty of innocence: and when they led him away as a lamb to the slaughter, it was evident that they were shedding the blood of "the Lamb of God."

We may take another view of this contrast between the

spirit of the world and the spirit of Christ, and turn our attention from the particular facts of his history which have been cited, to the dispositions which are implied in those and in other facts of the gospel narrative. Thus, the mere worldling is selfish, essentially and grossly selfish, seeking only personal enjoyment or personal aggrandisement. Christ gave his life for the world, not only in the act of parting with that life, but in its previous and entire devotion to the universal good of mankind. His existence in the world was one great act of disinterested sacrifice for the world's salvation. The worldling contracts a certain callousness of heart; his feelings lose their native quickness, purity, and delicacy. In Christ there were all the tenderness and sympathy of the unsophisticated child. He evinced the acutest susceptibility of all that acts upon humanity. The worldling has an external smoothness and polish of manners, which is but external, and but manner; too often a mask. In the manners of Christ we trace nothing conventional, nothing artificial; but that "grace was on his lips," and in his looks, of which art never produced more than a feeble imitation, and which is the soul of benevolence within, manifesting itself by the bodily organs; beaming or melting in the eye; softening the voice to music; giving expression to the features; and regulating every gesture by its pervading and harmonising influence. The worldling makes men his tools. He plays upon them, and he works with them. He thinks basely of them, and basely does he use them. With Christ every human being was a holy thing, not to be profaned, not to be sported with. If they were lost, he would recover them; if polluted, he would cleanse them; if desecrated, he would sanctify them afresh to their God: but still, in all its forms, he loved and venerated humanity. The worldling partakes of the world's impurities. If he has not wallowed in wickedness, or shown himself in the loathsomeness of iniquity, yet its stains are on him; the gold of his nature is become dim; he has not escaped the contagious leprosy of vice. Christ was the friend of publicans and sinners; nor did he shun the intercourse of Scribes and Pharisees; he moved among them all; but the foul atmosphere of profligacy and hypocrisy became pure when he breathed it, purified by his presence; and when he penetrated earth's foulest mists, there were a light

and a glory around him which they could neither defile nor obscure. The worldling is absorbed in the things of time and sense. The invisible to him is the non-existent. His morality is, "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die." He walks by sight, and not by faith. All his desires and hopes crawl upon the earth; none mount upward towards heaven, none fly onward towards futurity. But while Christ trod the earth, he lived in heaven. By devout communion and spiritual perception, he was even then in the bosom of his Father. He had meat to eat which his disciples knew not of,—living not by bread alone, but on the word of God. Invisible realities were not the less realities to him; they were ever present in his mind. God, and Providence, and immortality, and heaven, rose as distinctly on his soul, as the towers of Jerusalem and the hills of Judea on his bodily sight. They entered into all his thoughts, feelings, motives, anticipations. The visible and the unseen were to him but parts of one whole; and death and resurrection but a slumbering and an awaking, to pursue the same objects, and go on in the same course. This world was ever in his view; but how small a portion was it of the whole that he contemplated! God and man, time and eternity, made up the moral universe in which he lived, moved, and had his being.

If we are Christ's, we have his spirit, else are we none of his. We, too, must be not of the world while we are in it. But we must be not of it as he was not of it; and many have taken to be not of it in very different ways, and to very little good, either to themselves or to others. It is not being "not of the world" to care nothing about the world; to be indifferent as to its improvement or deterioration; to be absorbed in our own pursuits or pleasures, and confine every feeling and care, as by enchantment, within our own little circle. This is the worldly principle. This is no discipleship to one who wept over the coming calamities of Jerusalem, and rejoiced in spirit at the approaching conversion of the Gentiles. He was never indifferent to human good or human ill. They were his good and evil, and we should make them ours. It is not being "not of the world" to affect peculiar austerity of manners, and make great conscience of indifferent and trifling matters, and wage war with amusements, and be proud of voluntary

mortifications, and exhibit religion ever with a gloomy and a frowning face. There were such people in Christ's day, but they were certainly not among his disciples or imitators. They particularly disliked him, and called him a Samaritan and a demoniac, a glutton and a wine-bibber. It is not being "not of the world" to be a furious sectarian or partisan, more anxious that people should believe than that they should think; striving more to propagate a creed than to disseminate knowledge; compassing sea and land to swell the numbers of a party, but not making children of light, goodness, and heaven. This is all worldly. These are all but different modifications of the selfish principle; the reverse of his who came, not to make a party, but to enlighten the world. And how beautiful it is to trace from youth to age the course of one who is not of the world as Christ was not of the world; who walks with him as he walked with God; the felicitous circumstances of whose childhood have formed a barrier against the petty falsehood, the coarseness, the passion, the greediness, and the other pollutions which so often are cast upon the infant mind to blot and blur it, by the heedlessness, the injudiciousness, the bad example, of those around; whose early feelings have been gently turned away from the corruptions to which they might have clung, and trained around the principles of justice, devotion, and goodness, to which they adhere with safety, and which they adorn by their adherence; whose youth grows up, not in the seclusion from all knowledge of the existence and nature of ill which makes defenceless, nor in the unguarded intercourse with the world which depraves too often both principle and practice, but so as to secure the wisdom of the serpent with the harmlessness of the dove, the loveliest as well as the mightiest union; who preserves through life the simplicity and integrity of character, the warmth and generosity of heart, with which he started; not deceived by the crafty, nor awed by the proud, nor made misanthropic by the ungrateful; but trusting the worthy, admiring the excellent, with all the fulness of his heart, loving all and benefiting all: who in his age is yet the companion of his children, the friend of the young, the associate of the wise and good; his heart, like the prophet's sight, not dimmed with age to the perception of loveliness and the promises of

hope ; and who, when he dies, leaves a world he helped to bless for the world to which he properly belongs—the world of purity and peace, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of the throne of the God of love; and around him are gathered those of kindred spirit, from every nation, tongue, and people under heaven!

Sermon XXIX.—Christ's Legacy of Peace.

"Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid" (John xiv. 27).

Briefly to delineate the mental peace which in this parting discourse of our Lord's appears as so precious a blessing; to show that Christ himself was its possessor; and how he bequeathed it to his apostles, and through them to his disciples to the end of time,—are the objects which I propose on the present occasion. May they be so accomplished as to affect each and all of us according to our peculiar need; to lead us on in the right path, if it is therein that we are walking; to recover us with promptitude, if we have unhappily strayed therefrom; to strengthen us where we are weak, soothe our sorrows, control our passions, and calm our agitations; and thus bring upon every heart the plenitude of the gospel benediction, filling it with "the peace of God which passeth understanding, and which the world can neither give nor take away."

Think not lightly of this blessing; it is to the soul what health is to the body; like that, but too liable to be underrated; yet, like that, essential to very much which is, and worthily, most highly prized and most eagerly desired. The term itself, both in its literal meaning as to the condition of nations, and in its figurative acceptation of a mental state, seems merely to express a negation, the absence of conflict; but we should greatly err if on this account, in either case, we held it in contempt. To the world, peace is not only the cessation of the evils of hostility, but ordinarily the season of commercial prosperity, of intellectual and moral improvement, and of acceleration to the progress, and extension to the happiness, of humankind. And it is in mental peace that the

soul progresses and prospers. That, too, is auspicious to the improvement of the understanding, the feelings, and the character. If the word expresses only the absence of agitation, yet it implies the production and the presence of happiness. Taking in all that it presupposes, and all to which it leads, it designates a condition the most desirable in this world, and is neither an unapt nor an unworthy description of that for which we long in the world to come.

Mental peace is the result of a certain harmony and consent of our inward faculties, intellectual and moral, with one another, and with our relation to external things, material or spiritual, visible or invisible, and actually existing, or only in the mind's conviction. It is the proper adjustment of these to one another, like the wheels and levers of a machine, which only in their fitness and concurrence, and their adaptation to its position, moves as its maker meant, and answers the purpose for which he framed its parts, and combined their power, and fixed the sphere of its operations. Without it man answers not the end of his being. Peace is obstructed by the undue preponderance even of any merely intellectual quality. If, for instance, the imagination be out of proportion to the judgment, the soul will often be borne impetuously along in a career of peril, like a ship whose sails are all expanded when they should be furled, awhile the seemingly triumphant and joyous companion of the mad tempest, but too soon its victim. It is not peace to be at the mercy of a whirlwind. So, if the judgment be not animated and stimulated by a due degree of imagination, the unbalanced mind will ill perform its functions. Peace is not torpidity. It is harmonious movement, and not sluggish fixedness. Judgment without imagination wants impulse, as without memory it wants materials, so to perform its allotted work as that the man goes on an even pace in the right path. We might extend this observation to all the different faculties, as they are called, and which are in fact so many modifications of the one principle within, and we should still find that, without a due proportion in their strength and exercise, the most perfect and permanent happiness is unattainable. Nay, from their disproportion there are sure to result disorder, confusion, and suffering. More obvious is this truth, if we advert to

man's moral nature, to his consciousness of what he is and does, with his consciousness of what he ought to be and do. Want of conformity here involves self-condemnation; and self-condemnation is no companion or harbinger of peace. The highest talent, without moral principle, only lays waste its own and others' joys; and moral principle, without mind to enlighten and to guide it, has often laid up stores of vain regret for the bitter mischiefs done by well-meant efforts. Remorse has often followed from the dictates of a misguided conscience. It was so with the apostle Paul. When moral principle and ignorance were combined, he was the persecutor of Christians; when knowledge and moral principle were associated, he was the missionary of Christ. But with all the outward privations of the apostle, he was a happier man than the persecutor with all his external advantages. The principles of his nature were no longer violated by the principles of his religion. Blessed be God for that eternal check upon false notions of duty! Under delusion, crime may become conscientious, but it can never become felicitous. A pernicious creed may say, Go on; but a voice within, which no creed can stifle, which issues from the very depths of our nature, and will sooner or later be heard, commands to stop. And as there must be an internal harmony of the intellectual and moral faculties to insure peace, so must there also be a certain correspondence with external things. It often seems to man that he is not rightly posited in the universe; that he was born out of due time; that in other circumstances of country, age, or station, he would have been a great and good, a useful and happy character; but that as it is, he wastes his years piping to those who will not dance, and mourning to those who will not lament, and his capabilities are confined and withered by their dislocation from that proper region in which they would have been so fair of blossom and so sweet in fragrance and so rich in fruit. Hence an unceasing and corroding fretfulness. It is all a fallacy, however much there may be of the semblance of reality. Either there is a miscalculation of the powers possessed, or of the effect upon them of those other circumstances, so much desired; or a neglect of the opportunities afforded by those which actually exist; or an impatience of that process of development which

the Creator has judged best, and which may extend far into another world. If circumstances cannot be commanded to adapt themselves—as the individual reckons adaptation—to the mind, the mind should be regulated to adapt itself to circumstances. It must put itself in harmony with them to be at peace. When this is done, a perception of fitness, unheeded before, will gradually arise, and continually enlarge, until the hand be fully recognised that orders all things well. Good men have lived to see that what have been their heaviest sorrows; what had appeared the saddest restrictions of their usefulness towards others; nay, what had seemed most unfriendly to their own improvement,—had all been wisely and benignantly arranged by Him who "leadeth the blind by a way which they knew not, making darkness light before them, and crooked things straight;" and their experience is for our profit in the season of discontent. Of the peculiar fitness of our circumstances to ourselves, what we know not now we shall know hereafter; faith should assume that fitness, observation labour to trace it, and diligence strive for its improvement. No longer then conflicting with what cannot be overcome, or making our comfort contingent on a change in what is unalterable, but directing the powers within us in the ways left open for them by the things without us, there is less and less discordancy, there is more and more peace. We are what the Creator made us; we are where he placed us; and doing our duty there to the best of our ability—I mean our duty in the large and noble sense in which it includes, not merely the not lying, swearing, or stealing, but the multiplication of happiness in ourselves and others by the promotion of knowledge and of goodness—we cannot and shall not be wretched. There will be peace within; mental order, harmony, light, and beauty; man's little world will have passed out of its chaotic state; and with the lustre which God bestowed, and in the orbit which he ordained, will move and shine to his glory.

Of this best and beautiful blessing I affirmed Jesus Christ to have been the possessor; and I argue the fact from his character, from his principles, and from his recorded behaviour in many trying portions of his history.

His character was free from those discordant elements

which keep many minds in a ceaseless turmoil of profitless and wretched agitation. There are no vestiges in it of angriness or sensuality, avarice or ambition. There was in him none of that restless craving for deference, applause, and homage, which flattery itself cannot satiate; whose increase of appetite grows with what it feeds upon, and which will no more let the bosom have peace than if it were an undying worm with its eternal gnawings. There was none of that irritability which is ever in arms, and ever wounded; whose goadings are always worse within than without; and which, as a defensive covering, is like the poisoned garments told of in fables, clinging to, torturing, and at length consuming, the limbs about which they were girded. All mental and moral qualities that belong to humanity in perfection, blended in him most gracefully. There was the clear mind and the pure heart. He could discern the true and appreciate the beautiful; develop a principle to the judgment, and display a picture to the imagination; adore God in faith, and love man with fervency; gaze with tearful tenderness on others' sorrows, and himself walk with untrembling step to die on the Mount of Calvary. Such a mind must have dwelt in serenity; but a serenity which was the element, not of stagnation or corruption, but of orderly movement, of mighty power, and of boundless enjoyment.

I argue from his principles. He did not affect to teach a theological system, but he taught what was worth infinitely more than a thousand systems, a few simple, great principles of God and his government, which stand like everlasting pillars of truth, while the little fretwork of systems is successively obliterated by the wind and the shower, or crumbles away by its own unsubstantiality. Now, these principles are all in harmony with man's nature; and, moreover, they give the only satisfactory solution of the seeming discordancy between the dictates, powers, and capacities of that nature, and man's condition on the earth. They resolve the great enigma of ancient moralists and modern sceptics. By the infinity of God's paternal love; by the universality of his providence; by the freeness of his mercy, and the correctiveness of his inflictions; by the doctrine of immortality, and the identification of his glory with the good of all his creatures,—they put to rest not

only the alarms of penitence, but a thousand harassing anxieties which would else haunt even the wisest and the best. They are a rock, and he first built thereon, and remained secure and calm, though the rains descended, and the winds blew, and the torrent came. He was his own first disciple, and devoutly believed the truths he taught. He felt himself in the hands of his Father, his Almighty Father; and till earth or hell had power to pluck him thence, his soul had peace.

Look at the facts of his history. His ministry commenced with a series of temptations which, though recorded in figurative language, were real temptations, and furnished a severe test of the state of his mind. These visions of temporal greatness, of personal enjoyment and glory, would not have passed away from an uneasy or dissatisfied mind as they did from his, leaving no more trace than the shadow of a cloud on the waves of the sea, tinged by it for a moment, and then rolling on in light their destined and everlasting course. He had no hesitations, no regrets. Then, how fairly and calmly did he tell the spirituality of his mission and kingdom to the Jews, whose leaders, with their aid and influence, and whose multitudes, with their violence, would have raised him to temporal sovereignty had he so aspired, or would he have yielded to their aspirations! How touching are the predictions of his own death which he so frequently uttered to his apostles! How single was his aim in these mournful conversations! To dissipate their delusions; to abate those mistaken hopes which could only embitter disappointment; to purify their minds and feelings from earthly taint, and raise them heavenward; to nerve them for their future hardships and conflicts; to possess their minds with consolation even before the season of suffering came: these were his objects; but not to excite for himself either their sympathy or their admiration; and least of all, to prepare any effort for averting the catastrophe. There are the same indications in the self-possession, the mildness, the frankness of his conversations with those who were using every art to entrap him in his speech. There was never any repining, there was never any faltering, in Christ. The rejection of him by the Jews, the treachery in his own little community, the mockery of the trial, the ignominy of the cross,—nothing could reach his soul and beat it down, or

stay its course. One expression in the garden, the momentary wish that the cup might pass from him, recalled as soon as uttered; and one exclamation on the cross, "My God! my God! why hast thou forsaken me?"—these were the whole tribute—nature could no less—which he paid to the triumphant power of external evil. In fact, to that external state of things—so dark in its aspect, so bitter in its inflictions—he had reconciled himself and put his mind in harmony with it, as heaven's appointment, and what was really best. His only task of consolation was for others, whose piety was not so profound, whose faith was not so firm, whose benevolence was not so disinterested and expansive, and whose views of God's character and plans wanted the light and lustre, the loveliness and boundlessness, of those presented to his capacious mind. Rightly, then, was he vested with the heritage which he bestowed on his apostles; well was he qualified to bequeath the blessing of the text, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." And they did succeed to the possession, confirmed to them by seeing the extent to which their Master enjoyed it; and they were happy men. Though the synagogues of their country cast them out; though with their nation's prayer for blessings there soon was blended an anathema on the Nazarenes; though they were often dragged as culprits before the tribunals, and as often abandoned to the blind fury of the bigoted multitude; though the jealousy of Roman tyranny was excited, and pointed towards them, by the malicious accusations of their brethren; though in their social relations there was the sword of discord severing the bonds of natural affection,—still they were happy men. Though cast down, they were not forsaken; they lived on past memory, and future hope, and present faith; God's spirit bore witness with their spirits, and it was a joyful testimony. Though their outward man perished, their inward man was renewed; and for that cause they fainted not. They learned even to glory in tribulation. For them to live was Christ, and to die was gain. When persecution slew them, they did but rest from their labours and fall asleep in Jesus; and they left us writings imbued with a spirit of love, and peace, and hope, and happiness, whose tendency might be expressed in one of their

own precepts; for as it is understood and felt, it makes the world "rejoice evermore."

This was giving not as the world giveth, either in the extent of the gift, or in the principles and manner of its bestowment. The world has no such prizes wherewith to reward its votaries; its mightiest monarchs have no such favours to dispense. And in a way as unworldly was the power of giving it acquired. Christ died that we might live; he became the author of mental peace to millions by a work which included the entire devotion of his life, and ended in his submission to an ignominious death. We have in combination the purest benevolence, the noblest generosity, the highest self-sacrifice, for the communication of the dearest blessing. "Not as the world giveth, give I unto you."

His gospel conducts the believer to mental peace by its conformity with the principles of our nature; by its putting them into harmony with each other, and inducing that reconcilement with outward things of which I spoke at the commencement of this discourse. Christianity perfectionates humanity: it has facts for the memory, poetry for the fancy, truth for the judgment, pathos for the heart; for the moral principle, clear light and powerful motive, elevating its standard, indicating its laws, and promulgating its sanctions; and its doctrine of a Providence implies the eternal and universal fitness of things, their arrangement by Infinite Wisdom and Paternal Love, working out the greatest good of every individual being, and of course of all beings that exist. And, therefore, that which was said of the Christian church may be said of every Christian individual,—he is "a building fitly framed together—a holy temple to the Lord;" the parts as proportioned, and the symmetry as perfect, as the dedication is pure and divine. His memory is exercised; the Gospel has facts and maxims which should be firmly fixed in its capacious storehouse; but he is not the mere religionist of memory, the depositary of words, phrases, and texts, who says what was said before him, does what was done before him, and whose peace is only the slumber of contented ignorance. His judgment is exercised; revelation is purposely constructed to secure its attention and demand its frequent decisions; the true disciples, "by reason of use, have their senses exercised to discern

both good and evil:" but he is not the mere religionist of intellect, to whom there is no more in theology than in geometry, and whose peace is only the cold quiet of scientific abstraction. His imagination is exercised: Christianity is rich in the visions which are its delight, and in the stimulus required for its creative powers; but he is not the mere religionist of imagination, whose fancy is ever shadowing forth unreal forms of horror or of ecstasy, and blazing up into crowns of light or fetters of flame; and whose peace is as the meteor, now shining and now exploding; or like the cloud, tossed hither and thither by the wind. His feelings are exercised: they are called forth in holy communion with God, and in the cultivation of all human sympathies; but he is not the mere religionist of feeling, the waving foliage of whose emotions neither rests on the solid stem of principle nor bears the fruits of usefulness, and whose peace is but a brief transition from rapture to despondency. The agency of conscience is employed, is paramount in his mind; but he is not the mere religionist of conscience, without moral truth as the law for it to expound, and self-knowledge as the evidence on which it decides, and a future judgment in righteousness according to works, the trial of which it anticipates the verdict. The peace of an uninstructed or perverted conscience is but a hollow truce, for the conscientiousness which arises from obedience to it is often an outrage on human feelings; their rebellion will often disturb it here, and the discoveries of hereafter will destroy it for ever. His faith is exercised: it is cherished by reason; it is fixed on an Almighty Father; it realises futurity; but he is not the mere religionist of faith, who believes with blind avidity, and relies on partial favour, and selfishly exults in a system which puts man in hostility with Providence, and makes all, except the arbitrarily selected few, look round on God's own universe with suspicion, antipathy, or despair; and whose peace at best is only the heartless pleasure of gazing in supposed safety on scenes of storm, and wreck, and agony, and death. His is not the faith which generates a sense of injustice in the dealings of a righteous God; of confusion or cruelty in his work, which is perfect; and of disorder, partiality, unmerited and unrequited suffering, and a wanton waste of the elements of happiness, in a government by which Infinite Power and Wisdom are

accomplishing the purposes of Infinite Benevolence. The peace attained, if any be attained, by such religionists as these, must needs be fallacious in its principles, uncertain in its duration, mischievous in its results, and unsatisfactory in its nature, even when most completely realised. None of these are like the Saviour's legacy; they are the world's gifts, not his; and perilous gifts they are. They are of human invention, not divine revelation. The best of them acts but on a part of our nature; while the gospel influences the whole, consecrating body, soul, and spirit to the Lord, and ennobling them in that consecration. Christianity possesses itself of all capacities of perception, thought, and feeling; all powers within, all beings and events without; making peace, and reconciling all things, whether they be things of heaven or earth; thus glorifying the name and mission of him who was the Prince of Peace, sent by the God of peace, who will be all in all. Doubts and difficulties break not up the principles of a mind thus harmoniously constituted; sorrows and temptations shake not a soul thus well balanced and self-balanced. Upon it the discipline of Providence does its blessed work; and in it the gospel exhibits its consolatory and purifying energy. And he who has enjoyed Christ's benediction of peace on earth will assuredly be greeted by his welcome to glory in the judgment.

Sermon XXX.—"Christ our Passover."

"Christ our passover is sacrificed for us" (1 Cor. v. 7).

In one sense, the whole of Christ's ministry was a sacrifice; and if "to do good and to communicate" be "sacrifices with which God is well pleased," even as offered by the most imperfect of his creatures, still more must he have been complacent in the perfect devotion of that perfect being to the work assigned him, and in its accomplishment by so much exertion and through so much endurance. His solitary prayers and his public teachings; the emotions which he felt and the miracles which he wrought; his meekness, pity, patience, firmness, and active love—these were "a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto the Lord," such as no priest of the house of Aaron ever offered,

and which showed that a new and better priesthood, spiritual and eternal, was instituted in his person. But the term is still more appropriately descriptive of the closing scenes of his ministry. He had before appeared as the Lamb of God in his innocence; but then he was led to slaughter; the victim was immolated. He had before, by his compassionate miracles, taken men's infirmities and borne their sicknesses; but then his blood was shed to take away their sins. His character and his work shine with an increasing lustre of beneficence towards that consummation when, on the cross, he exclaimed, "It is finished."

The affection and tenderness of Christ's heart, the beautiful commingling in his character of the gentlest and the grandest qualities of our nature, had never been more touchingly exhibited than they were at the Last Supper with his apostles. Inferior as they were to him, still they were his chosen associates; they had evinced their faith, their love, their reverence towards him; they were the preordained witnesses of his works and his resurrection, the ministers of his gospel; and they were about to be scattered as sheep without a shepherd. "He knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father; and having loved his own that were in the world, he loved them unto the end." So testifies one evangelist of his emotion; and another tells us, that "when the hour was come, he sat down, and the twelve apostles with him; and he said unto them, With desire have I desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer." Even towards the infatuated traitor there was no bitterness. Pitying the agent, but knowing the necessity of the act, he said, in language only understood by the wretched individual to whom it was addressed, "What thou doest, do quickly." And then how his heart overflowed to that small but faithful band! How incomparable are those consolatory discourses which he delivered, that their hearts might not be troubled! He was the comforter; he, about to be the agonised, the betrayed, the rejected, the crucified; and he promised them another comforter, one which should be so by glorifying his name. And they ate their passover together. They commemorated Israel's deliverance of old; Israel, now on the eve of its solemn rejection of the Messiah, and of its renunciation thereby of

God's covenant. The original blessing and the final crime were blended in his contemplation. The one prepared for the establishment of their polity, the other for its dissolution. The one set up their tabernacle, the other destroyed their temple. The one made them a people, the other made them fugitives. The one prostrated Egypt at their feet, the other crushed them beneath the tread of Rome. The one freed them from generations of laborious slavery, the other sold them to centuries of ignominious bondage. From the one they became monuments of the wise laws which they received; from the other, of the gracious gospel which they refused. The one made them a victorious nation in Canaan, the other scattered them in subjugation among all the countries of the earth. By the one, God constituted them his peculiar people; by the other, they made themselves the outcasts of religion. But he foresaw that his own would be passed over in that calamity; that while the nation perished for its rejection, those who believed would be saved; that their faith in him would be as the blood of the sacrifice sprinkled on the door-posts of their fathers' houses in Egypt, and the destroying angel would pass them by. That event would be to them deliverance. It would free them from the persecuting power which, so long as it existed, would menace their destruction. They might not and could not understand at that moment the necessity and the consequences of Christ's sufferings; but they soon would; and they would say, in the anticipation of the predicted catastrophe which awaited their nation; they would say, when the terrific shock and the great deliverance came; they would say, in sympathy, through all the countries and in all the churches in which they would be scattered; and they would say, with a moral application of the phrase to the salvation which his religion brings from sin, sorrow, and apprehension,—"And even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us."

And then he brake the bread, and gave the cup of blessing, and called them his body and blood; that body which was soon to be broken, that blood which was soon to be shed, for the life of the world. Simple memorials, but how expressive!

He led his followers to his favourite retreat in the garden of Gethsemane, discoursing as he went in a continued

strain of tenderness and consolation. There his soul was for a moment shaken; and then the Son of Man was betrayed with a kiss: the priests had their prey; the sacrifice was bound to the horns of the altar; and his blood was on their heads.

It is not my purpose to dwell on the particulars of that familiar and painful narrative. All concerned in the guilty transaction—the disciples by their desertion; Judas by his treachery; Peter by his apostasy; the false witnesses by their fabrication; the Sanhedrim by their malignity and hypocrisy; Herod by his mockery; Pilate by his weak and criminal compliance with the atrocious injustice; and the soldiers and people by their brutality;—all did but illustrate, with the force of contrast, the firmness, truth, meekness, purity, and self-devotion of the character which was thus perfected through suffering; all did but accomplish, in their ignorance, guilt, and infatuation, the wonderful plan of the God of wisdom and of love; as Peter soon after declared to them, "Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain." On that plan let our attention be fixed; let us inquire why it was that the Messiah needs must suffer; how his life became the passover of Christian redemption.

The establishment of Christianity in the world was the object of all the preceding dispensations of heaven. They were all introductory to a spiritual and universal religion. Man is placed here to honour God by a devout heart, and benefit his fellow-creatures by a holy life; in which he arrives at the highest dignity of his own nature, achieves the largest amount of happiness, and fulfils the end of his creation. This is what the gospel works in him to will and to do. Judaism was a ministry of preparation up to the time of Christ: had it continued longer, it would have been an impediment. Two dispensations, each of divine, and therefore of coördinate authority,—the one local, the other universal; the one ceremonial, the other spiritual; the one for Israelites, the other for mankind,—could not have permanently coëxisted. It was necessary that the first covenant should be abrogated. We cannot imagine this effected by a divine declaration, even though it announced a better covenant, while yet the Jews fulfilled the obligations of the

first, and desired its continuance. God deals not with his creatures after such arbitrary methods. He always acts in accordance with the reason he bestows, or the filial confidence he requires. The first covenant might have been superseded by the Jews accepting the second, as offered to them by a divinely commissioned messenger. But in this case the Messiah would not have been put to death. There could not have been his public death, witnessed, perpetrated, and authenticated by a hostile priesthood and a hostile people. There could not have been such a death as certified the reality of his resurrection; that is, there would not have been such a resurrection as constitutes the very essence of the new covenant, the pledge and pattern of man's revival, the gospel of immortality. This implied his death, as that implied his rejection by the Jews. And that rejection implied the forfeiture of their privilege and covenant, which were held, from the very first, on the express condition of obedience, under the penalty of destruction. "For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you, of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you. And it shall come to pass, that every soul which will not hear that prophet shall be destroyed from among the people" (Acts iii. 22, 23). It was alike requisite that Jesus should die, for him to become by his revival the life of the world; and that he should be delivered to death by the Jews, that the covenant of outward observances and temporal rewards and punishments might be for ever forfeited and totally abolished. The Jews made him the world's passover. His resurrection was the introduction of all mankind into a better state, a new relation to God, an everlasting covenant, whose condition is holiness, and whose blessing immortality.

All mankind, except the Jews, had been ceremonially unclean; they were without the pale of God's true worshipers; they had no interest in his covenant with Abraham; they had no share in the sacrifices of the temple; but in the death of Christ and his resurrection they had an interest; when he was rejected and offered up, they were unclean no longer, but washed in the blood of the Lamb. They had been "sinners of the Gentiles:" he was sacrificed "for the many, for the remission of sins;" and all had access as acceptable worshipers, if they came with holy

hearts to the courts of the Lord's house, to adore the universal Father.

By sending him on such a mission, God gave his Son to death for the world; Jesus, by undertaking it, gave himself for us. A death so necessary and inevitable was a self-devotion, a sacrifice; as it annihilated the ceremonial uncleanness of the Gentiles, it was a sin-offering; and it was a passover, as it achieved the religious emancipation of mankind. It has been already observed that there was a peculiar sense in which it was so to the first Christians, as connected with their escape from the national punishment on the nation's crime.

The writers of the New Testament used sacrificial terms in connection with the death of Christ, because it involved sacrificial ideas. Their language was not merely allusive or metaphorical. It did more than illustrate by comparisons; it described realities in the operation of God's providence. It indicated a moral necessity for the suffering and death of the Messiah; his voluntary and magnanimous devotion of himself to the work; and the power, wisdom, and grace of God, by whom the whole was ordained and accomplished. "In this was manifested the love of God towards us, because that God sent his only-begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another."

Terms, the use of which at one period tends to illustrate a subject, may tend at another to obscure that subject. They may themselves have come to stand in need of explanation; they may have been grossly misapplied and perverted. It is so in the present case. Sacrificial observances are to us mere matter of history. They have ceased to elucidate; they require elucidation. Representations most unworthy of the divine character have been so long and so closely associated with them, that it is difficult, even for a strong mind, to connect them only with their proper and scriptural meaning. But there is nothing insurmountable in such difficulties, nor ought they to prevent our striving for the possession of all religious truth. There is no effort which its attainment will not richly recompense.

As the Jews were entitled to the privileges of the first

covenant by natural descent from Abraham, mankind have opened to them the blessings of this new and everlasting covenant of life, by faith in Christ. Hence Judaism is spoken of as the "flesh," and the gospel as the "spirit." The term "faith," like every other borrowed from Judaism, underwent a gradual expansion of meaning. It was at first that personal confidence in Jesus which he required in those on whom he wrought his miracles of healing. Thus they were made whole, or saved, by faith. By faith in him as the Messiah, including obedience to his directions and reliance on his predictions, "he that believed" was "saved," in the destruction of the Jewish people. And now faith saves us with the heavenly salvation, because it is identified with the religious principle, the source alike of holiness and hope. In this sense, faith in Christ is faith in God. It is confidence in the Son, which ascends to the Father who dwelt in him, spoke by his words, and wrought by his works. It is the knowledge of God as the universal Father, and the love towards him, and reliance upon him, which result from such a view of his character. Do we not owe this to Christ? Can we have any reliance upon Christ without a higher reliance upon that God who was the subject of his instructions, the object of his own filial and unbounded confidence? When we come unto the Father by him, we know that the Father will not cast us out. Faith in Christ is faith in humanity. We behold in him what humanity is; what faculties it possesses; of what excellence it is capable; and to what glory it is destined. We learn neither to degrade our nature nor to despair of our nature. Faith in Christ is faith in futurity. It is confidence in the ultimate triumph of good over evil, of life over death, of holiness over vice, of happiness over misery. It is the best principle of piety, of goodness, and of hope. He is "the wisdom of God and the power of God unto salvation." "God has made him unto us wisdom and righteousness, sanctification and redemption."

Love to Christ should be inspired by the love of Christ. His existence upon earth had the most perfect singleness of purpose. He lived and died for mankind. His was not the love which springs from an extended selfishness, nor that which arises from familiar association and habit, nor that of complacency. He came "to seek and to save

that which was lost." It was something far higher and purer than any of these; it was disinterested and universal benevolence, energetic to intensity. Who is there like unto him of all the patriots and philanthropists and reformers whose lives we read with interest, whose memories we hold in reverence, whose characters attract our affection? Our path may seem to lead through a wilderness, but we have escaped the narrow house of mental bondage, and we have before us the prospect of the promised land of peace and joy, because "Christ our passover was sacrificed for us." Blessed be his name! "Grace be with all them that love the Lord Jesus in sincerity." Grace *is* with them; the grace of rightly appreciating excellence; the grace of thankfully acknowledging bounties; the grace of an affection which purifies and elevates into moral conformity; a grace which leads to glory.

Individuals must generally purchase extended good to their fellow-creatures at the price of their own toils and sufferings. Even in the most limited operations of benevolence, there is some of this sort of commutation. Nor should we repine at it, when we see that the greatest blessings for mankind were obtained by means of the severest sufferings of the best and purest of our race. "It is enough for the disciple that he be as his Master." It is the happier for us the nearer we approach to him, whatever it may involve of present endurance. But as we approach towards him in the spirit of our minds, the less we shall need even of this motive to sustain us under the personal evils through which the general good is advanced; for in proportion as the mind of Christ dwells in us, we shall feel that the good of others is our own good; it will be identified in our imaginations, and exist in our sensations; the recompense will be realised in the complacency of our own hearts; and the joy set before us will become a joy within us. And if, in the course of our devotion to some righteous cause, the hour of trial and sacrifice should come, we may learn of him to say, "For this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify thy name." And till the last victories of goodness are achieved on earth, there will still be heard, by the holy and listening soul, that voice from heaven saying, "I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again."

Sermon XXXI.—Christ on the Cross.

I.

"Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do" (Luke xxiii. 34).

Paul gloried in the cross of Christ; and he was right. It was not only the best mode of checking the false shame which had crept in amongst the disciples; which made them blush to own themselves the followers of a crucified Galilean; which led them to a variety of disgraceful subterfuges, now conforming with the Mosaic rites and identifying themselves with the Jews, and now starting those speculations on the nature of Christ which were the germ of the corruptions under which gospel simplicity was afterwards buried for ages; it was not only, I say, the best mode of checking this false shame, and exciting a more noble and becoming disposition in those whom he addressed; but it was a feeling amply justified by facts, and which he would no doubt have cherished and expressed, even had no such occasion called for so strong an assertion of it. There are a number of reasons which warrant the Christian's pointing with exultation to the cross on which his Master suffered. It put the stamp of verity on the pretensions of Christ, and therefore on the evidences of Christianity. An impostor would not have braved that destiny as he did; nor have borne it as he did. He who seals his assertions with his blood, under circumstances at all analogous to those of the conduct, the apprehension, and the death of Christ, gives all the proof of sincerity which can be given. An enthusiast who had deceived himself into a belief of miraculous powers which he did not possess, would surely have attempted then their exercise; and his feelings would have been widely different from that resigned piety and tender benevolence and uniform composure which Christ manifested to the last. The cross tested the truth of Christianity; and of the result the lovers of Christianity and truth may boast. Another reason was the connection of the death with the resurrection of Christ. Proclaiming that great fact to the nation as the foundation of man's hope, the assurance of immortality, the signal for universal

reformation, the apostle would rather have had cause for shame, had the alleged death of Christ taken place in private, so as to make fraud suspected, and the truth not ascertainable. The cross became dignified by its subservience to the triumph of the resurrection. It made the perpetrators of a vile murder accessories to the glorification of him whose agonies they mocked, and over whose tomb they exulted. Nor could the propagators of the gospel feel shame, or any emotion but an honest and benevolent exultation, in that event which was the occasion of their success. It was only after the death of Christ that the gospel could be extensively proclaimed, and commence its career of wide and felicitous success. All before was preparatory. Then went it forth to Jew and Gentile, and he who was "lifted up from the earth drew all men unto him." There was a yet further source of glorying in the display which the cross afforded of the personal virtues of Christ; of his pure, generous, and exalted character. Every sentence which he uttered marked a virtue. The extreme of suffering could not absorb his feelings in himself. His thoughts ascended to his God, and they also flowed to those around him; whether they mourned, upbraided, or repented, that which the purest benevolence, in the calmness of ease and undisturbed contemplation, would indicate as the corresponding emotion, was breathed forth in his language.

From comparing and combining the accounts of the four evangelists,—and they are all very minute as to the circumstances of our Lord's death,—it appears that he spake seven times after he was nailed to the cross; and every sentence sheds a distinct light upon his character. The first words he uttered in that situation of agony were a prayer for his murderers: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." This generous supplication was not the result of a long mental struggle; not the trophy of a hardly contested victory over a sense of deep injury and a feeling of vindictiveness; not the subsiding of roused emotion into calmness; nor a pious thought for his enemies, after devotion for himself and his friends had gradually wrought his mind to a high state of pious abstraction from personal injury: it was his first exclamation, and apparently under the immediate and intense sensation of the pain produced

by their agency. The second was addressed to the dying malefactor, who seems to have expected that Christ would yet be delivered from the cross, and set up his kingdom, but to whom he declared that they were both approaching the state of the dead, or perhaps a state of happiness beyond that. "Verily, I say unto thee, this day shalt thou be with me in paradise." The third regarded his mother and the apostle John. In them affection triumphed over fear. They stood by the cross, though others fled. They came there to suffer with him, not indeed by external violence, but by internal emotion; to share the pangs of his mangled body by those of their wounded spirit, and to endure the agony of sympathy. His love was stronger than death, and he gratified his own affection by commending them to each other's kindness: "Woman, behold thy son;" "Behold thy mother." And the request of that moment was, as he knew and felt it would be, a sacred law to the beloved disciple. The fourth cry was indicative of decreasing strength and increasing suffering. The terrors of the scene were thickening and redoubling upon him: "My God! my God! why hast thou forsaken me?" And then, as if he had resolved that emotion of despondency into physical exhaustion, he said, "I thirst." Receiving the poor alleviation which was offered, he looked back on his career of labour and of endurance; he saw that his mission was thus far complete; that there was no more to do, no more to bear on earth; that he had but to die, and rise again to his promised glory; that his work was accomplished; he said, "It is finished;" and then bowed his head and expired with the pious exclamation, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit."

The text, then, is not an isolated expression of piety, goodness, and generosity. It belongs to a connected and harmonious series of indications of those qualities in a situation of the acutest suffering; and there are many other circumstances which should be borne in mind to estimate the full merit of this prayer. Consider the conscious dignity of him by whom it was uttered. Designated by Providence the Messiah of the Jews, before him the knees which bent in mockery should have bent in homage. He had claims on them for reverence superior to those which any temporal rank can bestow, an authority derived from

the God of their adoration, who made them a people, and gave them a country, and established with them his covenant, on the express condition of obeying the prophets whom he would raise up for their guidance. Insult and injury are the more keenly felt when offered by inferiors. There is then a bitterness in them not attending similar conduct from those to whom, in some things, we may owe submission. As he was vested with a dignity which humanity has never possessed in any other person, this aggravation in his case was unparalleled; and as an obstacle to forgiveness, it was by him unheeded.

Consider the benevolence he had previously displayed, the good he had done amongst them. That any concerned in that scene of cruelty had been personally the objects of his beneficent power we have no evidence for asserting. But it was in their streets that he had gone healing the distressed of every class. In the midst of them he had stood dispensing blessings. They could be no strangers to the fact, that he had restored the blind to sight, made the dumb sing for joy, and unstopped the ears of the deaf, and raised the cripple from his couch, and changed the wailings of despair for the dead into the rapturous embrace of child or brother recovered from the grave; and that, with mercy like that of heaven itself, he had descended to the abodes of guilt, and melted the obduracy of vice, and soothed the anguish of remorse, and cherished penitence into reformation, and encouraged reformation by approval, and sought and saved that which was lost, and delivered souls from death: they must have been aware of this; yet they crucified him, and he forgave them.

Consider the moment when this prayer for his murderers was uttered. It was in the endurance of acute bodily suffering, inflicted by their hands, awarded under the influence of their clamour, and aggravated by their mockery. He must have had little experience of corporal pain who cannot testify its power to irritate the temper, and becloud the reason, and suspend the dominion of good principles in the bosom, and vent itself in unworthy harshness even to the meekness that bears with and the affection that would soothe the sufferer: and here was the monstrous addition to that power of the immediate agency of those for whom he prayed to cause that agony; of their brutal

triumph in its struggle with the faculty of endurance and the principle of life; of their having wrested from an unwilling but time-serving judge the legal license for such atrocity; and of the falsehood that would have murdered fame as well as life, and imprinted the foulest brand on the forehead of innocence and goodness. The circumstances of the most illustrious instances of forgiveness on record are in contrast with those of Jesus. When Joseph forgave his brethren, it was in the moment of his triumph, not of theirs. Years had rolled away from the date of their offence. He could not remember the crime apart from its results, which had been most felicitous, and of which he was then in the full enjoyment. He was the real ruler of Egypt, and his brethren stood before him, suppliants, penitent, confounded. It was an exalted act; but these diversities place it far below that of Christ. The sparing of Saul's life by David, in the cave of Engedi, was a noble forbearance, for his own had been perilled, and could have little safety from future assaults; but he reverenced in Saul the anointed sovereign of Israel, a dignity which his own hopes would prompt him to set an example of respecting; at the moment he was secure, and superior; and the previous injury differed from that in our Lord's case much more than intention does from act. Socrates gave his blessing to the executioner who handed him the poisoned cup, but his executioner was penitent and trembling—he was in a full old age, free from bodily suffering, and surrounded by admiring friends. How extraordinary the mercy of Jesus! The brightest displays of human generosity only serve to illustrate the loveliness of its benignant superiority.

Consider the suggestion in the text of ignorance: "they know not what they do." A more limited interpretation has been founded on this phrase, which, I think, loses sight of the spirit of the text, and even gives a different turn to it. I mean that which applies it exclusively to the Roman soldiery who might be more immediately employed in the act of crucifixion. Their being singled out for excuse on the score of ignorance would imply the withholding forgiveness from others who were better informed. I see no reason for this distinction. They had probably been some time in Judea, where we continually hear of centu-

rions in a way which implies that the Roman troops were in a great degree domesticated among them, at least as far as Jewish bigotry and Roman pride would allow. And on the other hand, if the Jews did not perpetrate the very act, yet they were there stimulating cruelty in its execution, and doing all that they could in assisting and encouraging. I therefore take the language of Christ, in its most general application, to those who were around the cross, whose guilt and whose ignorance, though varying in degree, were of the same description. The suggestion that they did it in ignorance is a specimen of what may be termed the ingenuity of benevolence. Aggravations would have pressed themselves on the minds of others; that of Jesus was searching out extenuations. Jew or Gentile, they knew not what they did; they thought not of the enormity, they foresaw not the consequences. But how strange for their victim to be their advocate, and for the best plea on their behalf to be devised by him whose bodily frame was writhing under their inflictions!

Consider the form of this forgiveness; it was in prayer —a form not only strongly expressive of its sincerity, but indicative of the humility of Christ, of his aversion from ostentation, of his retiring from glory he might claim, and keeping himself, as the messenger of divine mercy, out of sight, only heedful of God the author, and of man the recipient. How much more impressive and affecting is it than if he had, as from himself, solemnly pronounced his forgiveness of their crime! His full forgiveness is implied. That passed in the recesses of his mind. He advances beyond that, to become their intercessor at the throne of God; and, with a beautiful selection of epithet, he appeals to that God on their behalf by the name of Father. Such was the close of that Teacher's life who pronounced the parable of the Prodigal Son. Such was the death of the Good Samaritan. Thus he sank into the grave, who was to rise from it and ascend to his Father and our Father, his God and our God. So expired the Messenger of the New Covenant, who proclaimed a God of boundless mercy and everlasting love.

Frequently to dwell upon the character of Christ is a Christian duty, a duty of gratitude and veneration which we owe to him who left us a perfect example, and a means of

rendering that example influential. Familiarity with vice may take off the disgust with which it is at first regarded, but familiarity with goodness increases the affection which it originally excited. There are few things more morally useful, as nothing can be more delightful, than a continued attention to the evangelical narrative of the ministry of Christ. Every scene of it should be pictured on our imagination, or rather should be graven on our hearts. It was not preserved to satiate curiosity by a single perusal, but to reform and improve the life by unceasing study. The beautiful simplicity of the style is a mere gratification of taste, and that perhaps may pall; the miraculous events produce a childish wonderment, and that must cease; the cohesion and authenticity of the narrative are matters of reasoning, which may be finally decided and disposed of; affairs of history and doctrine are theological inquiries, which may be answered, and their interest cease: but in contemplating the moral qualities of Jesus, we feel a gratification which can never pall, an admiration which never subsides, an interest which never flags. They are like the everlasting loveliness of nature—the same to all eyes, in all regions, through all ages; surviving a thousand revolutions of taste in works of art, and commanding admiration amid their thousand diversities. The splendid deeds of other celebrated characters seem adapted for imitation only on great emergencies; they belong to situations which occur but once in the life of but one man out of millions. The virtues of Christ are those of universal humanity, and partake in nothing of the singularity of his circumstances, except in the extent to which it called forth their exercise. The gospels should be a daily manual, and every day brings the opportunity of copying something there of submission to the will of heaven, or forbearance with the perversity, or exertion for the good, of man. No other being can be placed so as to display that illustrious union of devotion and generosity which the text exhibits; but its unostentatious mercy, its substitution of pity for resentment, its benignant ingenuity, its overlooking of aggravations, and its unconquerable good-will,—these are the merest commonplace of goodness, and the every-day requirement of every body's circumstances. Jewish and Roman ferocity did but call forth the best emanation of a spirit which should be ever glowing in the Christian's heart, for

which he has continual exercise in the ordinary walks of life, with family, or friends, or foes, or strangers, to suppress uncalled-for and unavailing severity, to moderate an angry feeling, to cherish benevolence in his bosom and gentleness in his manners, and keep him in peace with himself and all mankind. He follows Christ who, even in the most uncheckered lot, thus bears and forbears, restrains petty passions roused by petty provocations, neglects not little kindnesses because they confer not the fame of philanthropy, nor waits to be good until he can be also great. These are the genuine fruits of knowing the mind of Christ; the influences of his life, like those of spring-time, breathing on the earth, spread their peaceful and blessed loveliness over the whole surface of society.

"They know not what they do." In one sense, no vicious man knows what he does. All vice is resolvable into ignorance; ignorance at least of the nature of happiness, and of the means of its attainment. Would the vindictive man make vengeance the business of his life, and give himself up to the domination of that fiendish passion, hatred, and pursue its object like a bloodhound, if he really knew that the moment of success would be that of remorse; that he would but have kindled in his own bosom a quenchless fire, and animated in his heart the undying worm, and made himself a hell? Would the votary of Mammon make himself a voluntary slave, and renounce the enjoyments of life, and subdue the sympathies of humanity, and extinguish the light of intellect, and barter his integrity, and brand his conscience, if he knew that in the dreadful bargain he was driving he bought, not happiness, but only a gilded wretchedness? Would the reckless youth who reverses the fabled choice of the Grecian hero, and bids wisdom lecture to the winds, and throws by religion for old age or sickness, and rushes headlong in the chase of pleasure, and is foremost in every glittering scene, and first in every folly, and in his profusion squanders not only property, but honour, health, and principle,—would he do this if he knew what happiness was, and that, instead of gaining it, he was only making himself a wretch whom it required all the influence of religion over others' hearts for them to regard with pity rather than contempt, and who would become ultimately, even in his own eyes, most despicable? It may

be said, that such do know by the testimony of others' experience. But they trust not to others, and their own experience generally comes too late, and finds them fettered by that adamantine chain of habit, so easy to rivet, but so hard to break. These are examples which exist in all ranks of life; nay, which in some measure belong to the higher classes of society. As we descend, the union of ignorance and vice is yet more apparent, and the degree of the one affords a ready clue to the extent of the other. The alliances of knowledge and virtue, of ignorance and vice, are too close and general to escape those who heed the state of the great mass of population, whether scattered in villages or concentrated in cities. The histories of schools, of places of worship, of courts of justice, in different ways tell the same tale. The exclamation of our Lord was not the mere invention of generosity; it was not the singular palliation of particular offenders; it was a truth of human nature; it is the characteristic of the vicious: "they know not what they do."

Does not the text teach us with what emotions to regard the wicked? There is a pride, a sternness, a something approaching to vindictiveness of language, which one often hears, but which becomes not even the best of men when speaking of the worst. A brother's pity is the feeling which we learn of Christ. This is no leaning towards vice. The greater our tenderness for the individual, the greater also our abhorrence of that which, cleaving to him like a loathsome disease, effaces the image of God; which drags him from a celestial feast to prey on garbage; which perverts faculties designed for noblest achievements to the basest purposes; and, professing to fill up the measure of happiness, only proves the extent of his capability of wretchedness. The more we love the victim, the more shall we abhor that which makes him a victim, and feel that to stay the moral plague we have heaven's commission in the gospel, and the prompting of a kindred nature in our own bosoms.

Does it not also indicate the means of benefiting the wicked, and show that, next to watching and securing his own improvement, the promotion of knowledge is the good man's work on earth, that which his Father hath given him to do? Would that this object were pursued more systematically, more universally! The school, the pulpit,

and the press should all coöperate for its attainment. Poverty should be snatched, even in infancy, from the grasp of that ignorance which destroys its mental sight, to deliver it over to the fatal guidance of vice. Congregations would do well, not only individually, but conjointly, to associate with the influence of the pulpit the more powerful influence of early instruction. If we really enjoy and love the light, we shall aim at its diffusion until there are none within our reach who walk in darkness. If by our transgressions we may be said to "crucify the Son of God afresh," it is also true that by our inertness, while ignorance is producing its natural results of vice and misery, we repeat the selfish desertion of his disciples, or their untimely slumbering. Every Christian society should surround itself with an atmosphere of public instruction; and by its active promotion of knowledge among the people, evince the sincerity of its prayers for their moral improvement. The emotions with which we regard our Lord's forgiveness of criminality should stimulate our efforts for the prevention of criminality. They who exert themselves for this purpose know what they do; they have learned the science of happiness, and are reducing it to practice, both for themselves and for others. He who offered for the guilty the prayer of compassion will bestow on them the blessing of his approval; the spirit of their dying Master animates their lives, and they best glory in the cross of Christ.

Sermon XXXII.—Christ on the Cross.

II.

"Now there stood by the cross of Jesus his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by, whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son! Then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother! And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home" (John xix. 25-27).

In the history of the human race, there are seasons of darkness when oppression and iniquity seem to prevail against goodness; when innocence is no protection from suffering and ignominy; when men's hopes and hearts fail

them, and the world appears as if its "God had forgotten to be gracious." Yet amidst these exhibitions of baseness, depravity, and cruelty there is usually some bright display of virtue on which the eye can rest with complacency, and which redeems the scene from utter abhorrence and disgust. Thus was it in the crucifixion of Christ. The atrocities of that transaction, considered apart from other circumstances, are bewildering and appalling. But in the very centre of the scene, around that cross on which its horrors were accumulated, we behold a group whose presence there is of itself sufficient to commend them to our regard, and even to our veneration. There were affection, courage, fidelity, devotedness; there was all that is best in natural human feeling, in moral principle, in pious faith, in that little band, and in him, the victim, whom they encircled. The apostle John was there, probably the youngest of the apostles, where maturer spirits shrank from venturing, attending that Master in disgrace and death, at whose right hand he had hoped to sit when on his throne of power. As the disciple, as the friend of Jesus, how much must he have had to encounter, both from those who were now exulting in the plenitude of their barbarous triumph, and from his own feelings, in making good, by the side of the cross, that station which he maintained!

Women were there, subduing the timidity of their natures, and the abhorrence of sights of blood and scenes of ferocious tumult, in the power of a mighty gratitude to him who had been their deliverer from the darkness of ignorance, in one instance from the aberrations of insanity, and on whose instructions they had so often dwelt delightedly. And there was one whose suffering must have combined and aggravated all that those women and that apostle endured; in whom his attachment and their feminine weakness were exalted, in the climax of misery, into a mother's love and agony; to whom the sight was keener than a sword piercing her own bosom; but who came there; and of whom this last mention in the gospel history leaves a nobler impression on the mind than all the vain honours of her subsequent canonisation; beaming a sainted glory around her head, whose purity and splendour are the work, not of the decrees of councils, but of the truth which records, and of the human heart which responds in admiration.

The principle of good becomes intenser in the same proportion as that of evil. The darkest vices generate the loftiest virtues, and illustrate the loveliness of those virtues by their own deformity. And as we cannot pass over the narrative of the crucifixion without selecting and resting upon this group, so contrasted with the infuriate multitude around, neither was it disregarded of him on whom they were wreaking their malice. The clamour of insult did not deafen his ear to the low wail of affection; his eye was not made dim, even by the gathering films of death, to the sorrowing aspect of those familiar faces; the emotion of a friend and a son rose strong in his bosom as he looked down on the disciple and the mother whom he loved; and the words which bequeathed the one to the other's care were doubtless the most precious blessing that could be pronounced on both by his dying lips. "When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by, whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son! Then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother! And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home."

Universal benevolence is the soul of Christian virtue. In this notion of virtue, however, Christianity stands not alone, at least in modern times; for a similar theory has been adopted and advanced by a philosophy disdaining the name of Christian, and elevating itself in proud rivalry. But so triumphant is the excellence of the gospel, that even with its precepts and examples before their eyes, men fail in forming a moral theory which can enter into any thing like a successful competition. The sceptic who, in the enthusiasm of his burning eloquence, told France and Europe of the fraternity of man, abandoned his own children; endured in his life what the Patriarch only anticipated as the curse of death,—"his sons come to honour, but he knoweth it not; they are brought low, but he perceiveth it not of them;" and exposed himself to the bitter reproach that he "loved his kind, but hated his kin." And the calmer reasoning of a calmer advocate, but who also denied Christianity its decisive weight in the argument, still left the general good an idol to which oftentimes the particular affections and their duties must be unhesitatingly immolated. On the other hand, how many are there who neither know nor care, perhaps, about theories of moral

obligation, but who practically adopt an opposite system; who contract all their regards to those whose interest is identical with their own; who love their kin so as to hate their kind, if any opposition can be suspected; whose exclusiveness exceeds that of the jealous patriotism of the little states of antiquity; and whose feelings would war with the world for the benefit of a family! Would that we could send both to study, as disciples, the morality of the gospel, and the life of Christ; or, if that lesson be too long, that they would only read, and read again, and arrive at the full comprehension, which would surely be to imbibe something of the moral spirit, of the record of the crucifixion! The just combination of unbounded love with particular attachment; the subservience of one to the other, or rather, the necessary inclusion of the one in the other, is one of the doctrines of the cross; and its practical teaching elevates the despised Galilean, in the agonies of a malefactor's death, above the idolised philosophers of enlightened nations in the calm dignity of their unmolested studies. Therefore do we glory in the cross. Of Jesus, even in that distracted moment, we say, as did Peter in a serener hour, "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life." And his were also, in life and death, the deeds and feelings which adorn humanity while there shall be life on earth, and make it a preparatory state to the endless life of goodness hereafter. In the text we see Jesus in the exercise of filial piety, of prospective care, of confiding friendship, and of that negation of self which became the Teacher of universal love. May the emotions which each of these particulars tends to excite towards him be felt by us, and manifest themselves in as close a degree of imitation as is allowed by the diversity of our circumstances.

1. His filial piety is here exhibited. There were sympathy, kindness, consolation, in the few words which he addressed to the mother who in the wretchedness of that moment could be little sensible that all ages would call her blessed. The great Exemplar of mankind only displayed in this a natural and even instinctive feeling, cherished and exercised under the dictates of religious principle. A mother has the claim of earliest care upon the heart. Our obligations commence before we can appreciate, before we are

conscious of them. By the time that reflection makes us aware of their nature and strength, they have accumulated a debt of gratitude of which we know not how to imagine the repayment. Scripture has selected the intensity and perpetuity of a mother's love to image out the infinity and eternity of that of God. "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet will not I forget thee." The very supposition, which is here made, of its failure implies that all things else on earth may sooner fail and change. The mightiest principle would be that which best suited the writer's purpose of displaying the immutability of God. Often has a mother's love triumphed over the bodily deformity, the mental weakness, even the moral depravity, of her offspring; and, what is perhaps harder than even all these, over ingratitude to herself. Nor has nature left us unprovided with tendencies to a reciprocity of feeling. The eyes of the thankless child will encounter the blazonry of his own condemnation long before he arrives at the pages of scripture in which it is inscribed, or at the bar of judgment, whence it will peal in thunder on his ear. Irreligious is not the word; immoral is not the word; unnatural is the readiest designation of his turpitude. The annals, I will not say of righteousness and piety, but those of vanity, those of guilt, both in ancient and in modern times, in the highest and the lowest stations of human life, have shown how the feelings of a child might survive when the mind had made shipwreck of religion and conscience. The slave of revenge, goaded by mortified ambition to the desolation of his native land, has been stayed in his vindictive career, at the head of his armed legions, by the pleading of a mother's voice. The literary idol, foremost of his own adorers, worshiping his own imagination with a zeal as fervent, though less clamorous, than that of admiring multitudes, has gratified a purer feeling than his vanity by offering his fame as incense to the affectionate pride of a mother. The hireling warrior, in the day and on the field of blood, has deemed that the death-bolt was turned aside by a mother's effectual prayer. And the criminal, driven by his passions to poverty, and by his poverty to guilt, and by the detection of that guilt to the court of justice, and by the sentence of that court to the scaffold, has concealed

his name and obscured his history, that he might spare a mother's shame and agony, and let her descend to the grave in almost the only ignorance that can be even comparative bliss. Surely we need not add to these instances the concurring example of the good, or the lengthened enforcement of scripture precepts to reverence parents, or the particular application of his conduct whose followers we profess to be, and whose life is our guiding star in all the paths of social duty.

I cannot omit, however, reminding those who bear the maternal relation of the extent of their power, and consequent responsibility. In proportion as God and nature have vested them with influence over their children's souls, is the obligation imposed to use it rightly, wisely, and as those who must render an account. It is not to be wielded capriciously, carelessly, or for low-minded purposes. It is theirs to impress the first lessons of rectitude, to inspire the first accents of prayer and praise. They mould the soul for vanity or goodness, for the world or God. The mind, which in after years may be hard as the rock to those who would grave on it the laws of God, is to them, in infancy, like that rock in its supposed state of fusion; and the finger of affection may trace on it inscriptions which shall never be obliterated—they become part of itself, and share all the durability of its being. Oh, seek the direction of Him who gives that power, and exercise it in the consciousness of His observance, and be His blessing on it for many a happy consequence, through many a long age of futurity!

2. The prospective care of Christ is here exhibited. There are several indications in the gospel history that Joseph was dead—that the mother of Jesus was a widow. Even her temporal condition for the future escaped not his thoughts amid all the mighty and tremendous and multitudinous emotions of that hour. And for child, or parent, or any dependent on us, whom we may, at the resistless call of death, leave behind in this too selfish and regardless world, well does such carefulness become the man and the Christian. The provision for his own house which the apostle enjoins, and the absence of which he brands as worse than infidelity, extends not only to the present, but surely with equal force to the forlorn time when the prop of that house shall be levelled with the dust. Yet on this subject it is

difficult to dwell; for while there are some instances in which mere personal gratification and recklessness sacrifice to present enjoyment the earthly comforts, and the support even, of a family, there are many more in which hard enough, to mind and body, is the struggle for present subsistence; and it is almost felt as a calamity that the death of those so intimately connected and dependent should not be as contemporaneous as their revival is expected to be on the common notion of the general resurrection. I would not lacerate the feelings of the one, while lashing the selfish and wicked folly of the other. Provide, as God enables you, as you can by all the honourable means which he has placed within your reach, for those who shall survive; and remember that there is other provision than that of pecuniary supply for temporal necessities, which religion, which real and enlightened affection, require your making. Provide for their hearts. Leave them an inheritance of endearing and ennobling recollections. Raise yourself a monument in their souls, in the contemplation of which they shall through life delight. By your conduct to them and to all, insure a memory which shall be blessed. This is a provision for their happiness, the making of which will alike benefit yourselves and them. The parent who acts unworthily, bequeaths his child a lasting sense of pain and degradation. Provide for their minds. Lay the basis of a well-informed, correct, and justly proportioned intellect. Leave them not, if you can avoid it, in the helplessness of ignorance and feeble-mindedness, or in the worse than helplessness which arises from the absence of principle. This is a provision which many may make who can make no other; for which no heritage of property can compensate; and which, in the absence of that, will be no unenviable portion. If, in the common acceptation of the words, you cannot, then, help them, train them to the ability to help themselves.

3. The confidence of friendship is illustrious in our Lord's language to the beloved disciple. What a world of honourable meaning is implied in that brief exclamation, "Behold thy mother!" And what a simple, beautiful, expressive, and approving commentary upon it is the fact, with kindred brevity and so unostentatiously annexed, "And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home"!

There are anxious moments in some lives, when the possession of such a friend would almost be deemed well purchased by the endurance of such a death. How strangely have they read the gospel—and yet there have been such, and some of them of Christian fame well merited—who deemed that Christianity sanctioned not private friendship, but merged it completely in general benevolence. He who cannot recognise and love individual desert, can have no real philanthropy. It is one of the many ties, such as those of kindred and of country, by which Providence has bound together humankind. The whole mass of society exists compactly by the thousand links of cohesiveness which spread through it in every direction. Nay, Christian hope not only recognises, but prolongs, the ties of particular affection, and contemplates their perpetuated existence, and entwines them in the notions it favours of heaven's felicity. But let not the youthful heart, in its romantic dreams, grasp too eagerly at the splendid confidence here displayed. Rare indeed must its existence be; rare indeed the emergency which would justify such an appeal to it as here was made: rare, in the best earthly friendships; and an utter impossibility in most of the connections that go under that name—in the junction of vain spirits in the pursuit of pleasure, or that of selfish ones who may have for a time a common interest. The first breeze of misfortune scatters these cobweb ligaments; the first touch of affliction's fire consumes these flaxen bonds. Congeniality, equality, honour, moral and religious principle, must weave the cord which sorrow cannot snap, nor time decay, nor the scythe of death sever. I remark,

4. Our Lord's negation of self in this scene. How little relates to his own emotions; how much to others! If ever even a friend and a mother could have been forgotten in his mind, or disregarded while they were present, it was then. How much he had been enduring! His public ministry had been graced by that brightest of its scenes, when Jerusalem's thousands shouted Hosanna. The blight of treason had been on it, and an apostle had sold him to the priests. He had wrestled with the solitary agony of the garden of Gethsemane and the public shame of Pilate's hall. His body was writhing with the dreadful pains of that dreadful death. Enemies were around, loud

in their insulting joy, in their cruel taunts. The stupendous purposes of his mission, and the approach of their fulfilment, were present to his mind. His country, his people, the world, were upon his soul; and the darkness of death was gathering fast and thick upon him. Oh, what then must have been his collectedness, his affection, his unutterable superiority to all we mean by selfishness, in the moments whose record we have now contemplated! This is the summit of Christian perfection. Surely the creature can soar no higher towards the excellence of the Creator. His work done; his enemies forgiven; his friends blessed; the world redeemed;—he had only to die, and to revive from his brief sleep to his throne of eternal glory.

Christian, this was thy Master. Is there further need of exhortation to live not unto thyself? Vain were all the words that could be poured into thine ear, if this of itself sink not into thine heart; if it beat not there, a living pulse of goodness. "Because he lives, we shall live also;" and therefore, *as* he lived, let us live also.

Was this imposture, seeking for selfish ends by base means? Was this enthusiasm, losing life itself for an insane reverie? Either hypothesis is a solution of the scene fit only for the boldest sophistry to advance, and for the blindest credulity to receive. Reason exclaims with the centurion, "Truly this was a righteous man! this was the Son of God."

Sermon XXXIII.—Christ on the Cross.

III.

"And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Matt. xxvii. 46.)

The very words uttered by our Lord are preserved here (by the Evangelist if he wrote in Greek, or by the translator if, as many critics maintain, Matthew wrote in Hebrew, or rather in the current dialect of the Jews of that time) merely to account for the mistake of some who stood by, and who supposed that Jesus called for Elias, probably to appear for his deliverance. They are the com-

mencement of the 22d Psalm. That Psalm consists of two parts; the first is the language of supplication (to the end of verse 22); and the second is expressive of thanksgiving, hope, and exultation (from verse 22 to the conclusion of the Psalm). The coincidences in both parts with the record of the death of Christ are very striking, and that, whether we regard the facts of the crucifixion, or the emotions of the sufferer. There is the contrast of his utterly forsaken condition, of his being abandoned (in external appearance) even unto death, with the deliverances granted to patriarchs and former prophets. "Our fathers trusted in thee; they trusted, and thou didst deliver them. They cried unto thee, and were delivered: they trusted in thee, and were not confounded. But I am (treated as) a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people." Now David had from his temporal calamities a temporal deliverance; and such was the principle of that particular providence under which the Jews of old lived, and which was the great peculiarity of the Mosaic dispensation. The preservation and the greatness of Abraham; the elevation of Joseph from the dungeon to the palace; the restoration of Job and the doubling of his possessions; and the termination of David's strange and checkered adventures in the splendour of royalty;—these are but specimens of what was, for a long period, within the confines of Judea, as regular as a law of nature. Hence they considered tribulation as evidence of guilt, and of the abandonment or judgment of heaven; and were startled at the Christian doctrine which the apostles so frequently enforced, of affliction being a paternal chastisement, and consequently a blessing. Hence, too, much of the offence of the cross. Jesus (if a prophet) left undelivered, abandoned to earthly calamity, was, with their notions, an anomaly, and his own spirit was depressed by the contrast. The 7th and 8th verses are, "All they that see me laugh me to scorn; they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, He trusted in the Lord that he would deliver him: let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him." Place by the side of this the record in Matthew: "And they that passed by reviled him, wagging their heads, and saying, Thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save thyself. If thou art the Son of God, come down from the

cross. Likewise also the chief priests mocking him, with the scribes and elders, said, He saved others, himself he cannot save. If he be the king of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him. He trusted in God; let him deliver him now, if he will have him; for he said, I am the Son of God." This Psalm was by the Jews themselves esteemed a prophecy of the Messiah; and how unconsciously did their malice fulfil it to the very letter! Again, ver. 16, "for dogs have compassed me; the assembly of the wicked have enclosed me; they pierced my hands and my feet." How accurate a picture of that meek sufferer on the cross, of the painful mode of his suspension there, and of the clamorous, raging multitude around! Ver. 18: "They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture." "Then the soldiers" (John xix. 23), "when they had crucified Jesus, took his garments and made four parts, to every soldier a part; and also his coat; now the coat was without seam, woven from the top throughout. They said, therefore, among themselves, Let us not rend it, but cast lots for it whose it shall be." Here the Roman soldiers fulfil one particular in the carefulness of avarice, as the Jewish priests had fulfilled another in the insolence of triumph. The history of David shows nothing to which this could apply, but by very remote allusion. The invention of so minute and incidental a transaction by all the four evangelists, as the division of the garment and casting lots for it (for this they all state, though John only gives the reason for the latter), their coincident invention, is altogether incredible. In the latter or thanksgiving portion of this Psalm, besides the general idea of deliverance after this extremity, of itself sufficiently striking, there is language which seems to imply the resurrection of Christ and the calling of the Gentiles. The end of ver. 29, "None can keep alive his own soul," is rendered in the Greek version, the work of Jews, and long anterior to the time of Jesus, "and my soul liveth unto him," or, "liveth again unto him," or "shall live to him,"—a sense confirmed by other ancient versions, and indicating the original reading. It agrees best, or rather only, with the spirit of the whole of this division of the Psalm. The revival and personal glory of the sufferer are implied throughout. So there is, at least,

a seeming intimation of the inclusion of the Gentiles. Not only is the seed of Jacob invited to glorify the Lord, but (ver. 27), "All the ends of the world shall remember, and turn to the Lord, and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee;" and (verse 31), "They shall come, and shall declare his righteousness unto a people that shall be born, that he hath done this," or "whom Jehovah hath ordained,"—Scripture phraseology for admission to religious privileges; the birth of knowledge and of hope. These are coincidences of fact; while, if we turn from fact to sentiment, from exterior occurrence to internal emotion, how could a more distinct expression be given of what Jesus, with his trust in God and love to man, his conviction of his own mission and anticipation of his own resurrection, must have felt, than what we have in this Psalm? The breathings of agony and depression, almost to despondency; the effort of piety, as if rallying its strength by the invocation of the Holy One who was the praise of Israel; the fluctuation of this feeling into a mournful contrast with the temporal deliverances of the fathers; the particularising of the insults and injuries then pouring upon him like the beating of a storm on some unsheltered and defenceless head; the blending and passing of all these feelings into supplication, earnest to intensity; and the transition from that to calmness, to confidence, to exultation, the prospect of personal recompense, extended honour, and wide utility, in the spiritual deliverance of the human race;—these, and I have merely enumerated the topics as they succeed each other in the Psalm, present a coincidence not less remarkable than the outward facts; these commend themselves as a picture of the workings of the Saviour's mind; nor do I think any other character or situation can be assigned of which such a train of emotions can be so accurately predicted. I argue, then, the Psalm to be predictive. In proportion to its dissimilarity to any events that befell David, and to any set of feelings which they could have produced in his mind, does its strength as prophetic evidence increase. It is corroborated by the absence of imprecation on those who inflicted these evils. To this practice David was somewhat prone; from Christ it was abhorrent. And as it was not in the power, and would have been quite as

far from the desire, of the apostles to have accommodated the events to the prophecy, so neither could they accommodate the prophecy to the events. The Jews were its guardians. Nor had the Jews power materially to falsify their trust (which could they have done, it would have been in an opposite direction); the Septuagint and the Hebrew text serving as independent and mutual checks.

Christ's sufferings consisted, say some, in the judicial abandonment of him by the Father on account of the imputed sins of mankind; the infliction of agony upon his soul, because he was their substitute, as the punishment of their offences, and as a satisfaction to Divine Justice.

The adoption of this theory is being wise above what is written. It is altogether without foundation in the prophetic description of Christ's emotions, a description adopted by him in the very hour of its realisation. The prediction explains the Divine forsaking as consisting in the abandonment of him to the cruelty of wicked men, nor is there a single intimation of suffering inflicted on the mind directly by the Deity. What a strange omission would this be, if there were any truth in the doctrines of satisfaction and substitution! Take it either as fact or feeling,—either as an event that God at that time so tormented the holy Jesus, or as an emotion in his mind, an experience of such agony from such a cause,—and the silence is alike inexplicable. Where the scripture thus markedly stops short of modern theology, it is safest for us to stop short too.

The argument from omission is strengthened if we advert to what is not omitted. Particulars of suffering and aggravation are introduced which would be altogether trifling in comparison with the visitations of Divine wrath, had they been then on Christ. He suffered from the cold and careless procedure of the soldiery, and that is mentioned; he suffered from the taunts of the priests and the clamours of the multitude, and that is mentioned; he suffered from the obvious contrast of his own situation with that of former messengers of God, and that is mentioned. Can we believe that he suffered, infinitely more than by all these together, from the penal infliction on his soul of the torments due to sin by the Deity himself, and yet that that is not mentioned? How imperfectly, then, would the

tale be told!—the very essence and heart of his griefs passed over, while the mere adjuncts, circumstances light as air in comparison, have a full and ample record!—a prediction evaporating in the mere accidents of the event, and the victim himself adopting it to express his feelings in the endurance! Christ must, on the common theory, have recognised the justice of his sufferings, not as connected with future compensation and glory, but as connected with the character in which he stood, of the sinner's substitute. He then only suffered what was righteously due in consequence of the load of imputed guilt upon him. Is this the sentiment of the Psalm, or compatible with its spirit? Would he have asked, "Why hast thou forsaken me?" if he knew that God saw in him the representative and victim of all transgressors and all transgressions, from the creation of the world to the end of time? Is there not throughout the whole composition a feeling of wrong inflicted, a resignation even to Providence itself in its permission of that wrong, grounded, not on any existing imputed guilt, but on a future and glorious recompense?

The notion of transferring the sin of one person to another is not only unsupported by the scripture language often perverted to that purpose, and directly in contradiction to many of its plainest declarations, but that notion is in itself so inconsistent and absurd as to form its own refutation. Attentively to consider it with a mind unbiassed by the associations of reverence or terror which have been raised around it, is sufficient to insure rejection. What does it mean? Is it the transfer of the sinful facts themselves? That is a physical impossibility. A miracle might obliterate all memory of the past; but even a miracle could not make the past not to have existed. Cain killed Abel. There was a crime committed, which, once done, was done for ever. Could any subsequent operation, divine or human, natural or supernatural, cause him not to have killed Abel? A miracle might raise the murdered one from the dead; but it could not change the fact that the murderer had put him to death; it could not reverse the past conduct of the parties, and make Abel to have been the murderer, and Cain the murdered. As little could it cause the righteous Seth to have been the mur-

derer of Abel; or Jesus, the holy one of God, who came into the world ages afterwards. Nor do I see how this sin differs from any other—how it differs from the sins of those who aver that their guilt is imputed or transferred to Christ. In this sense, then, such transfer is impossible.

Although the facts are unalterable, I can imagine a miraculous transfer of the consciousness; but I think it utterly inconsistent with the character of God that such a miracle should have been ever wrought. By supernatural power on his brain, mind, or memory, Seth might have been made confident of having murdered Abel, might have had the evidence, as it seemed, of his own recollection and consciousness that he had done it; and Cain a similar supposed knowledge that he was wholly free from the perpetration or conception of that atrocity. On this theory, Christ would remember himself to have committed all the sins which the elect ever had then committed, or while the earth stands ever shall commit; and they would have a similar recollection of having wrought all the righteousness which he practised. This supposes the God of truth to work a miracle in order to make them all believe a falsehood. The world would be in a state of mere insanity, and moral agency could exist no longer.

The next step is supposing that, if not the fact nor the consciousness, yet the sensations which result from them are transferred; and that the remorseful pangs which the guilty feel may be transferred to the bosom of the innocent, and the complacency and peace of mind of the innocent be transferred to the guilty. Christ is, by many, believed to have felt those uneasy, those wretched emotions, which are the consequence of sin in the sinner's mind. He is believed to have been agonised to the extreme of wretchedness by the burden pressing on him of men's offences. But how can the sensations be severed from the recollection, any more than the recollection can be severed from the fact? He who is not conscious of the sin cannot feel the remorse which is merely the consequence of that sin. He who repents of what he never did, nor could prevent, nor know any thing about, and which happened thousands of years before his birth, must have a very singular tenderness of conscience. It would be yet more extraordinary to have such painful emotions for sins which

are not yet committed, and will not be till a thousand years hence; and yet this also would be implied in the imputation or transfer of believers' sins to Christ, in the sense we are now considering. That sense, therefore, like the preceding, on which it depends, is wholly inadmissible.

But though the innocent must be unconscious of guilt, and the guilty of righteousness, may not their judicial situations be changed in the sight of God? May he not regard and treat the innocent as if they had been guilty, and the guilty as if they had been innocent? I reply, No; he cannot so regard them; because he knows that such is not the fact. It would be dealing falsely. God could not see the sin of Cain in the heart of Abel or Seth, because it was not there to see. For the same reason, he could not see that, or any other sin of any other person, in Christ. The perception of Omniscience differs from that of creatures only in being more complete, in being absolutely perfect, in the most accurate correspondence with the reality; and therefore, infinitely less than to any other being can it be ascribed to him, that he sees innocence in the guilty, or guilt in the innocent. He must see and regard all as they actually are. There is one sense in which the scripture speaks of God calling things which are not as though they were. That is in reference to future events. It is only the assertion that a difference which exists to us, does not in that particular exist to him. The future and the present are alike to his eternal mind. This language cannot be applied to morals. Guilt and goodness cannot be alike to his righteous mind. He may regard futurity as present, for it is equally the object of his decree; he cannot regard guilt as goodness, for it is not equally the object of his complacency.

The only other notion of the transfer of sin or guilt is the transfer of its punishment. Thus it is contended that, though Christ was righteous, knew himself to be so, and was regarded as righteous by the Deity, he might yet bear the penalty or punishment of the sins of others. This notion, to say nothing of its implied violation of justice, can only exist in connection with a very confused idea of the true nature and object of punishment, with which it is utterly at variance. Mere suffering is not punishment. It

must be associated with previous guilt, in the minds of both the party inflicting and of that enduring. The innocent may suffer, but cannot be punished. The apostle Paul was not punished of Providence when he died on the scaffold for the cause of Christ. It was his crown of martyrdom on earth, the pledge of his crown of glory in heaven. It was meritorious suffering, not punishment. So, in a far higher degree, was that of Christ. When he submitted to death on the cross, he was the object of God's love and approbation, which the object of punishment cannot be to a judge. He was rewarded for that submission; but enduring a righteous punishment cannot entitle to reward. Punishment should correct the offender; but Christ was holy, and therefore punishment was not applicable to him. Punishment should secure from repetition of the offence; he had only done good, and not committed offence at all. Punishment should tend to prevent crime, by warning of the consequences those disposed for its commission. The interposition of a substitute destroys that warning. The sin is atoned for, on that scheme, before it is perpetrated. And if it be said that repentance is the condition of substitution, still this gains nothing more than would equally follow from forgiveness without substitution of which repentance is the condition. In every point, then, we encounter absurdity and contradiction.

Sufficiently dreadful are the sufferings of that scene, without the addition of mysterious horrors invented by superstition. Pain of the extremest kind,—that pain inflicted on a frame harassed and worn out by incessant exertions and severe trials; the sense of public degradation and injustice; the experience of base ingratitude and baser treachery; the desertion of friends; the exulting shouts of malignant enemies, ringing on ears whose sense death had begun to dull, when startled by that fearful stimulus;—whatever, in short, could inflict on mind and body the keenest consciousness of agony, was there; and well might the appeal burst from his heart and lips, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

That Deity cannot suffer, is a position which needs not be argued. All Christians profess to hold it; many, at the same time, most inconsistently affirming that Christ was God, and that Christ suffered; and softening this contra-

diction by the poor sophism, that though he was God, he suffered only as man. Besides that it would follow that only as man he made the atonement and satisfied Divine Justice, it may be replied, that a man personally united with God could not suffer. He could not suffer mentally; for his mind would be the seat of infinite intelligence and power; all things, past, present, and to come, would be equally obvious; and for any thing approaching to doubt, apprehension, depression to find entrance there would be a natural impossibility. He could not suffer corporally even; for mental energy and elevation, in proportion to their degree, render insensible to bodily suffering; and if the Infinite Spirit were the mind and soul of a body, the frailty of the one would be absorbed in the energy of the other, and the person so constituted be rendered incapable of suffering. Even if a preëxistent, angelic spirit had been the soul of Christ, he could not have been thus harassed and depressed. His recollections of heaven, and consciousness of superiority, and sense of deliverance by death, would have been too much for all that man inflicted to move him. The emotions portrayed in the Psalm, and appropriated by Jesus, are emphatically those of a man.

In his anguish, Christ had recourse to the scriptures for the expression of his feelings and their alleviation. If the passage he quoted was prophetical, this was a reason which cannot now apply; but there is an analogous propriety in our so using the general principles and truths of the word of God, when they fairly adapt themselves to our character and circumstances. And what are the characters, what the circumstances, to which scripture does not afford direction and admonition; especially the scriptures as completed and enriched by the record of Jesus, and the instructions of his apostles? There, when too much occupied by the world, heart and mind degraded to the level of its low pursuits, do we find ourselves impressively reminded of "things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God;" our attention is won to pure and exalted realities, and we become those "who use this world without abusing it." There, when faith becomes feeble and love waxes cold, do we refresh them from the river of the water of life, whose streams "make glad the city of our God;" "in his light we see light;" our moral strength is "renewed

like the eagle," and we have again "our conversation in heaven," and "walk with God." There, when trials appal and snares entangle us, we learn afresh to pray not to be led into temptation, and are directed to a way of escape, or strengthened not to "do evil and sin against God." There, when temptation has unhappily prevailed, and produced transgression, and transgression has borne its fruit of bitterness, we find the penitential breathings which our souls should utter, and our bosoms respond to the strain, and with them come mingling the promises of pardon which bar out despair from the repentant sinner's heart, and make us "return to the Lord, who will have mercy, and to our God, who will abundantly pardon." There, for the various relations of life, may we learn our duties, simply, and faithfully, and beautifully, and authoritatively portrayed; rooted in principles, condensed in precepts, illustrated by analogies, familiarised in maxims, and exhibited in examples. There, in the various calamities of life, we are solaced by the assurance of a paternal Providence, and taught not to fret "because of evil doers," but to look to the end; and the blessings of affliction are unfolded, and all the mercies of Almighty love that chastens, and of Almighty care that never sleeps or wearies. There, in the prospect of death, and depressed by the narrowness and nothingness of this mortal life, we trace the authentic record of him who seemed forsaken on the cross and abandoned in the tomb, but who made that tomb the birthplace of immortality for the human race, and that cross the ensign of his glorious kingdom. There we see the God of love, creating, preserving, redeeming, restoring, combining all things for good; the impartial Father, whose blessing was on the infancy of universal being, and who shall fill all things with joy ineffable and eternal.

No, Jesus was not forsaken of his God; and whatever for a moment might be the gloom of his soul, he felt that he was not, and even on the cross did he rejoice in spirit. And should despondency ever seize on us, thus may we shake off its grasp, and defy its power, and scorn its suggestions. In the dreariness of calamity, in the gloom of disappointment, in the conflict of temptation, even in the dark valley of the shadow of death, let us say,

> "The man of Calvary triumphed here;
> Why should his faithful followers fear?"

Sermon XXXIV.—Christ on the Cross.

IV.

"It is finished" (John xix. 30).

The great Author of the universe is represented, when the work of creation was complete, as resting from his labours, looking down with complacency on the new world of his formation, of which every part was finished, seeing that all was good, and crowning it with his benediction. The language used on this subject in Genesis undoubtedly shows less elevated notions of Deity than Christianity presents, or even than the Jews had become sufficiently intelligent to receive in the time of David and the prophets, for they spoke of God as incapable of repose or weariness. Perhaps even the writer, and many of the original readers, took not such expressions literally; but whether they did or not, they only ascribed to God that which is among the highest enjoyments of man—the satisfaction of having accomplished a great and glorious work, of having earned the right to say of some worthy and useful achievement, "It is finished."

Enviable, indeed, is that right through all the gradations of honourable labour to which it can be applied. Happy, in this struggling world, is the man who can claim it in reference to that decent provision for himself and his family which has been the object of persevering industry through many a toilsome year. To the man of avarice or vanity this never happens. There is never enough for greediness or glitter. But too seldom does it occur even to those of more rational and moderate desires. Yet it is the experience of some; it is the hope of all. Blessed is he who, as the sun of life declines, is conscious of having gathered around him sufficient materials for the comfort of his evening; whose toil is finished with his daylight; and who rests a while from his labours before he rests in his grave.

Of a prouder and more conspicuous kind is the satisfaction of the literary man, the poet, historian, or philosopher, in the completion of what is to vindicate his title to such appellation with the world and with posterity. Too strong not to be on record is the emotion of having produced a work which after ages "will not willingly let die." Such was his who told well the tale of earth's mighti-

est empire, from greatness to extinction. And others have betrayed the exulting throb of having raised for themselves a monument more durable than brass, on which the storm should break and thunder strike in vain, and which time itself should reverence. How many years they gave for that moment of feeling that they had finished the pledge of their immortality of fame!

Purer than this is the felicity of having conducted to successful termination some philanthropic labour involving the deliverance of multitudes from injustice and suffering. Watch the progress of a benevolent man, such as sometimes, in heaven's mercy, arises upon earth, with whom benevolence is a principle and a passion; his first strong sympathies with the wretchedness of the ignorant, the prisoner, the slave; the solitary workings of his own intensity of feeling on that about which the world, as yet, knows little and cares less; his efforts to gain the ear of the enlightened and the powerful, to interest their hearts, to secure their coöperation; his diligence to obtain public attention to information of what individuals endure, and work out before the world the fearful total of unregarded misery; the gradual hold he gets of the best feelings of humanity, till a general cry is raised of pity and indignation, at which cruelty or avarice must quail; and his advance thus onwards to that moment of holy triumph when he can say of the conflict of truth, knowledge, and justice with selfishness and oppression, that it is finished; and of the victory of humanity, that it is won. In the felicity of its success, mere literature must veil the head to benevolence.

There is a virtue, a success, a consequent felicity, yet rarer than this, and yet more exalted, implying such a character as is developed, and such situations as occur, only in the course of long ages; and that is when some one man, by his skill and courage, his prudence and his daring, his comprehensiveness of mind, his integrity of principle, his firmness of purpose, is enabled to project and achieve the liberation of a people; to create a great nation; to erect a temple of enlightened freedom, in which justice, prosperity, and improvement shall minister at the altar, and where the oppressed of other regions shall find an asylum, a sanctuary, whose portals never close; and to be what Washington was,

and Napoleon might and should have been, and humanity trusts that some yet live to be.

The supremacy of religion above all national and temporal considerations, suggests a higher joy in what a reformer must have experienced when events made him feel that he had been the agent of Providence and of God in achieving a spiritual emancipation which could never be subverted. When the spell of Rome, with all its antiquity and power, was actually broken; when souls had burst their fetters, and roused from their slumbers, and revived from their death; when authority had ceased to be the substitute for the Bible, and the priest for reason, and the will of the church for the rights of conscience; when the Reformation had evidently taken root in the earth beyond the power or art of man for its destruction,—then must he have said, "It is finished," with such emotions as would appropriate the thanksgiving, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation."

But the reformer must rank below the apostle; and though of the same kind,—for it is the noblest kind,—yet surpassing in degree, must have been the delightful emotions of the chosen and faithful servants of Christ, when they had done their allotted work, and awaited their promised crown. What a fulness of felicitous reflection there is in that retrospect of Paul's, the sentiment of which he and they would feel when they trod the scaffold or were fastened to the cross: "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of glory, which the Lord the righteous Judge shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing!" And whither does or can this lead us for a climax but to Calvary, to the Son of God and Saviour of the world, when he bowed his head to death with the exclamation, "It is finished!"

What volumes of meaning there were in those few and simple words! Did he refer, as is not improbable, to prophecy, to those numerous coincidences of his own life, character, and sufferings, with expressions in the Jewish scriptures, of which one had just taken place,—"In my thirst," says the Psalmist, "they gave me vinegar to drink;"—to predictive delineations of his meekness, his ago-

nies, his mission, and his rejection? They were finished or accomplished; they had passed from words into facts, from prophecy to history. Did he, the great and commissioned Teacher of mankind, refer to his instructions, to the words which the Father gave him commandment to speak, the words of truth and life, of God's love and man's duty, of mercy on repentance and resurrection from death? He had declared, and with simplicity, persuasion, and power, beyond the reach of human eloquence, the whole counsel of God: and that work was finished. Did he refer to exertion; to journeyings by day, and watchings through the night; to deeds of benevolence so ceaseless that he could say, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work;" to miracles and teachings, in the synagogue and on the mountain's side, in villages and cities; to a struggle of activity and endurance with ignorance, prejudice, and perversity; to toil of which the time and place reached to the limits of his country, and of his own public life? That, too, was finished, and he rested from his labour. Did he refer to suffering? He had borne fatigue till his exhausted frame sank beneath it; he had been the patient object of calumny, of insult, and of treachery; there had been attempts to crush him by open violence, concealed plans of assassination, and a series of contrivances to entrap him into the appearance of offence against the Roman authorities; he had been agonised till "he sweat as it were great drops of blood;" he had seen himself rejected by his country,—a rejection which he knew involved the ruin of that country by the most terrific calamity; he had been seized by his foes, deserted by his friends, hurried to a midnight trial, accused by perjured witnesses, his condemnation extorted by clamour, scourged and scoffed at, crucified between two malefactors, there insulted; and now he felt that the cup had been emptied to the dregs, the friendly hand of death was on him, and suffering was finished.

Did he refer to his own life and conduct as an example to mankind? That example had extended to every virtue, and reached the highest point of excellence. He had lived to God, and for mankind. Where ignorance was, there had he been for its enlightenment; where grief, for its consolation; where vice, for its rebuke; wherever and whenever duty called, there had he been in its diligent discharge;

or piety, in the prostration of filial devotion; or charity, in the exercise of a boundless and powerful benevolence. The insulting enemy, the despairing mother, the faithful disciple, the penitent malefactor, were grouped around his cross, eliciting his forgiveness, compassion, kindness, truth; the best social virtues radiating from that central orb of piety, which shone undimmed while heaven and earth were darkened. In his life he had shown man how to live; to perfect and crown the pattern, there was but to teach him practically how to die; and it was finished. Did he refer to his spiritual kingdom? He was on the steps of his throne of power and glory. The promised recompense was earned. The price of his predicted elevation was paid in labours, tears, and blood. The days of his humiliation were numbered, and the last was in its closing moments. The spirit was about to be poured out on his disciples. Power from on high was to glorify his name, and establish his cause. Miracles on miracles were to attest that he was "Lord of the living and the dead." His ascent was finished, and when he reappeared it would be to announce his spiritual supremacy. Or did he refer to the deliverance of mankind from the tyranny of death, the bondage of the grave; the gospel redemption, by God's love and grace, from darkness, doubt, and fear; the exhibition of our everlasting heritage; the demonstration of immortality? He finished his allotted task in that stupendous work of wisdom and of mercy, when he bowed his head to death, to await his Father's call, and come forth the first-born from the dead, "that in all things he might have preëminence." Well, then, was this his dying exclamation; and it should have a grateful and undying echo in the human heart, a response of love and praise which should resound through time to eternity.

How fade away the characters of all other agents, and the completion of all other works, in comparison with this! In them we ever find that there are faults to be balanced, and allowances to be made, and errors to be palliated, and evils to be censured; with him we are ever safe, and our safety is in—what in all other cases is our danger—abandoning ourselves freely to the warmth of admiration, till it take unlimited possession of our souls, and mould us to his moral likeness. In their deeds we see evil mingling with

the good which they achieved, and boundaries of that good in extent or duration. But the voice which told his work was finished, proclaimed glad tidings of great joy to all people and to all ages. It announced the salvation of the world. When, in the remote periods of an endless futurity, the affairs of nations, of mankind, of human life, even our own, wax faint in the mind, and seem as the dreams and sports of childhood, alike trifling and evanescent, that will lose none of its importance or interest, but its magnitude will grow on our immortal sight, and its blessedness be the unsating theme of our eternal contemplation.

Remember, it was in death that the Saviour uttered this exclamation; and only in death is it that the disciple may venture on its adoption, as to the work which is given him to do, and of which, in the judgment, he must render his account. We have a contest to maintain with errors, ignorance, and vice, in ourselves and others; and "in that warfare there is no discharge." A man may not retire at pleasure from his Christian profession, his Christian duties. He may never say that he has attained enough, has done enough, and may now repose from exertion, and slumber in the security of salvation. There is a woe on "those who are at ease in Zion;" and however much of the field of improvement and usefulness may have been cultivated since the hand was first put to the plough, "he that looketh back is not fit for the kingdom of God." The duty of the obedient, as that of the transgressor, may be summed in one word: to the sinner it is repentance; to the saint, perseverance.

We cannot be sure till death that our trials are finished; the confidence of their being so would defy experience, and be a perilous presumption. Man here is born to sorrow, and cannot rise above the sad condition of his nativity; it is only hereafter that he is born to unmingled and unfading joy. It is said, that while there is life there is hope; and so there is: and therefore there is fear also, or else hope would become certainty; and therefore there is evil also, or else we should not need to be comforted with an expectancy. Adversity may yet have in store for us some reverse of fortune which may abridge our comforts and tax our failing strength, when most we needed ease and most reckoned upon it. The fidelity of friendship may yet yield, and bend,

and break, and pierce the leaning hand all the more deeply for the weight of its confiding pressure. Our eyes may doat on the fairest blossoms of promise, and some unseemly blight yet pass over them, and turn to worthlessness and corruption the promised harvest of our hopes. In the quiver of sickness may be many a poisoned arrow which shall yet rankle in our flesh. While there are any living dear to us, graves may yet open into which our tears shall flow. While there is good on earth, it may be lost; while hope, it may be disappointed; and while existence, it may be embittered. A holy trust in God, a patient resignation to his will, are dispositions which we should cherish in our prosperity, as a treasure hoarded against the season which may come of our heart's necessity; as an armour which we may only put off when we put off mortality.

We cannot be sure till death that our temptations are ended; nay, we may be sure that they are not; and any inclination to suppose that they were, would only be an indication of our being enthralled by one, and that most dangerous. For the oldest voyager on life's ocean, even with earth's boundary, the grave, in sight, there are yet rocks on which he may make shipwreck of faith and a good conscience. As the laws of God may be observed, so may they be transgressed, at any age; and each has its peculiar temptations to its peculiar vices. As one set of inducements to sin becomes weaker, another becomes stronger. The snare is removed, not broken; the attack is varied, not abandoned. "I will not offend any more," may and ought to have, in life, the strength of a resolution; only death can stamp it with the certainty of a prediction.

Not till death should we say of the effort for improvement in knowledge and righteousness, that "it is finished;" finished as to the accomplishment of its object it cannot be, from the nature of the case. That would imply our possession of all knowledge and all righteousness. And for it to cease in any other way would only show that we were insensible to the importance of that object, that we undervalued the exhaustless riches of God's truth, and had lowered the perfect standard of Christian duty; that we heeded not Christ's command to "be perfect, even as our Father in heaven is perfect;" that we had not the

apostolic spirit which animated to "press forward to the things which are before;" that our path was not that of the just, which "shineth more and more unto the perfect day;" that we wanted the very principle of spiritual life, which is a principle of interminable progression. Till we die, we may be assured that something more may be learned from the Bible, useful to us for devotion, consolation, or hope. Till we die, we may be assured that our self-knowledge is not so accurate, nor our self-government so complete, nor every personal virtue carried to such a pitch of excellence, as will warrant our even imagining that the task is finished. It can have no voluntary termination on our part. It is the service of God, and we must wait his permission to repose, which he gives in death.

Nor till then should finish the feeling and the exercise of benevolence to our fellow-creatures. We can never before have a right to leave off doing good. Our means may be limited; our expectations may be baffled; our progress in beneficence may be slow; our return may sometimes be ingratitude; but the Christian "liveth not unto himself." While we are tenants of this earth, man is our neighbour, and we must love him as ourself. The claims of the distressed are on all that live, according to their ability. Whether the power of benefiting others, intrusted to us by Providence, be that of instruction, donation, counsel, example, it is a talent which we must occupy till the Master come. It must not be buried in the earth till we are. And then, if possible, it should survive in the happy results of its exercise.

But at death our trials and our labours do finish. Nothing of what we have described goes on with us into the future world, unless so far as it is a source of blessedness. There is an end then of the thousand ills that flesh is heir to. Together with his terrors, death also brings this welcome and compensating thought,—he proclaims that probation is ended, with its toils, its dangers, and its endurance.

And when probation ends, recompense begins. The succession is immediate to our perception, on any theory of the distance of the resurrection and the unconsciousness of the interval. The last sensation of earth is the first of heaven, that sin and sorrow are no more.

And of that state of safety and of bliss—of perfect safety,

bliss unutterable, which Christ's resurrection certifies to us, and to which Christ's precepts and example guide us, and of our enjoyment of its felicity, it shall never, never be said, that "it is finished."

Sermon XXXV.—The Resurrection of Christ.

"And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain" (1 Cor. xv. 14).

Christ not risen! It is a fearful supposition, though only made for the sake of argument. Yet such suppositions, occasionally introduced, have their use for both the understanding and the heart; and by stimulating us to a vivid conception of the consequences which may be logically deduced, they aid a just estimation of the evidences of truth, impress us with the sense of its importance, and make us aware of the extent of its practical influence. Thus that powerful production of a late poet, Byron's poem of *Darkness*, is but a philosophical deduction of the results which would ensue, on the extravagant assumption that the sun were blotted out of the universe. Its power is in its truth (that first position, a false one, being granted); and the effect, intended or not, is to make us feel the blessedness of having that great central light, and the multitudinous and ceaseless enjoyments which, by its means, Providence spreads over the face of the earth. And thus, to turn from works of imagination to those of pure intellect, the demonstration of many a proposition in geometry consists in assuming its opposite, and showing the absurdities which necessarily flow from that assumption. The process which is the ground of a powerful appeal to the fancy, in the one case, is, in the other, found equally available for the illustration and the demonstration of abstract truth. Let us, then, with the apostle, make such an assumption as to the resurrection of Christ. And if we find the consequences such as may well confound the judgment and grieve and appal the heart, let that make us cling the closer to that glorious truth, and rejoice the louder in it, and act the more consistently upon it. And if there be those who doubt, let it make them pause; and if there be those who

deny, let it make them consider,—lest they deceive their own minds, and trifle with their own best interests.

1. If Christ be not risen, then vain is our faith in the credibility of historical testimony.

This is the first consequence adduced by the apostle: "Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ, whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not." He also refers here, and in the text, to an ulterior topic, the denial of the resurrection in general.

Now, though it may seem a light thing to the rashness and hardihood of youthful scepticism "to daff the world aside," the world of historic truth, "and bid it pass;" though it may seem brave sport to break up the very foundations of our knowledge of former times and former men; yet, when reflection comes, if ever it should come to their minds, they will take a different view of this matter, and one which better becomes a rational being. If Christ be not risen,—if the attestations to that event by the apostles in the face of the Jewish government and nation; and if the attestations to miracles wrought by the apostles in confirmation of that event, by the disciples and martyrs of the first age of Christianity, in the face of the world,—if these were attestations to a falsehood, what is there, in all history, of which we can say, This was a fact? Of the death of Cæsar, for instance, that undisputed and undoubted tragedy, there are no such multiplied contemporary attestations, writings of those who were personal witnesses of the transaction, or who saw his mangled body afterwards. If multitudes are mentioned in the Roman records, so are they in the Christian records, at least as to the confirmatory miracles; which is the same thing: for he who allowed that Peter and John healed the lame man in the name of the risen Saviour, would not deny that the Saviour was risen; and if nobody denied the death of Cæsar, as many did the resurrection of Christ, for that very reason the sincerity and veracity of the witnesses was put to no such fiery trial. Deny the one, and you cannot prove the other. Nay, there will be scarcely any thing left which can be proved, of all that men have done and suffered, and the record of which is the rich treasury of our mental inheritance from our forefathers. I know that the distinction of the natural and the

supernatural may be suggested; as if the natural and supernatural were any thing more than different operations of the same power; differing not in the degree of power which is exercised, but simply in the circumstance of frequency and infrequency: as if the laws which regulate faith in human testimony were not applicable to all subjects to which that testimony can be borne. Those laws are attacked when it is denied that the evidence of the apostles and first Christians authenticates the resurrection of Christ. They are sacrificed to a gratuitous hypothesis of the impossibility of miracles. A deviation is supposed, in the case of the apostolic testimony, from the known laws of the human mind, which would, in fact, be itself a miracle; as much a departure from a law of man's mental and moral nature, as the miracle is supposed to be from the laws of his physical being: and with this difference, that the physical miracle of the resurrection, if true, is satisfactorily accounted for, as the work of God for the good of man; while the mental miracle, if true, is an unfathomable mystery, produced we know not by what power, and producing universal doubt and darkness. We are driven back, then, by the consequences of the opposite supposition, upon the faith of the resurrection. There is without it no resting-place for the understanding. Its defence is the defence of history. If there be credibility in human testimony, Christ is risen.

2. If Christ be not risen, then vain is our faith in the certainty of philosophical deduction.

It may be said that our belief in the death of Cæsar does not rest entirely on testimony; that the fact is involved in subsequent events of Roman history, which imply its having happened. And in a similar way many historical facts are evidenced to us by a subsequent state of things in which they are implied, and which resulted from them or their influences. What is commonly called the philosophical argument for Christianity is of this kind. It is this: The rapid prevalence of Christianity in the Roman empire, considering all its circumstances, presents a mass of phenomena which must have had a cause, and of which no causes that have been assigned,—and, after the efforts of Gibbon and others, we may add, which can be assigned,—afford a satisfactory solution, unless we admit the supernatural

origin of Christianity. This, which includes the resurrection, will account for them, and nothing else. What, then, if that be denied? Why, it is also, in all consistency therewith, denied that we can so reason; it is denied that we can argue from effects to causes. Another of the great pillars of knowledge is struck down; another shrine of truth becomes a pile of shapeless ruins. But to this state scepticism can never bow the human intellect. If the belief in Christianity were universally and miraculously suspended, men would nevertheless continue to philosophise thus upon history; and the moment they applied this method of reasoning to theological history, the faith of the gospel would revive. Philosophy, then, in self-defence, like history, drives us back upon our belief in the resurrection of Christ.

3. If Christ be not risen, then vain is our faith in the worth of human character.

Character is the foundation of confidence, of faith; and there never was such a character on earth to inspire confidence as that of Christ. It was too simple for deception, too pure and holy for deception, too exalted and generous for deception: I speak of it as exhibited in the gospels; where it is not only a character too excellent for a wicked man to have assumed and sustained, but also for any man to draw who belonged to the selfish, grovelling, and wicked class of deceivers; and which, therefore, must have been the real character of the man Christ Jesus. And if the character was real, the resurrection was real too; for it was not the character of one who was formed to impose either on others or on himself. His searching eye could penetrate into men's hearts. How easily he detected the motives of those who followed him with base and selfish purposes! How naked to him were the temporal views and worldly ambition of others! "He did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all; and needed not that any should testify of man; for he knew what was in man." And he unmasked the member of the Sanhedrim as easily as the mere populace. How he put to shame his hypocritical persecutors with their questionings! He walked unharmed and unentangled among the snares and pitfalls with which they endeavoured to beset his path; and ever and anon, though but in self-defence, turned back upon

them their own perilous devices. When he braved danger, what was there ever of rashness, or vain hardihood, or stoical pride, or mere desperation? It was the calm firmness of one who was strong in his own tried powers; strong in the God whom he served and represented; strong in the prospect of the glory which should follow. When he encouraged —and when did he not encourage?—the expectations and hopes of the afflicted and distressed, was the result ever that they were disappointed? What did he undertake that he did not accomplish? What penitent that came to him did he send away uncomforted, what disciple uninstructed, what inquirer unsatisfied? When did he ever give occasion for a friend to be ashamed, or for an enemy to triumph? If all this was fallacious, there is an end to confidence in the soundest head, or the soundest heart, or the noblest character. We should withdraw it even from the "friend that sticketh closer than a brother." We should refuse it even to the consistency that has endured the longest years, and braved the fiercest trials, and been unrelaxed beneath the melting sunbeams of a more dangerous prosperity. We should feel it neither in the living nor in the dead; but plunge into the dreary abyss of a universal scepticism of human truth and human virtue. And what would this be but an insane misanthropy? It bears no marks of a rational appreciation of human worth. Reason rebels against it as an absurdity; experience rebels against it as a glaring untruth; feeling rebels against it as an atrocious calumny. It would go near to dissolve society; it would leave no bonds to hold men together, but those of gross selfishness and direct coercion. We recoil from it forcibly; and that recoil again throws us back upon the faith of the resurrection. That, after such a dark dream, confidence in human goodness revives in our hearts, is evidence that Jesus of Nazareth revived from the tomb.

4. If Christ be not risen, then vain is our faith in a future state of existence.

This consequence also is specified by the apostle: "For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised; and if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished."

There is evidence—I think, considerable and convincing

evidence—for a future state, independently of the resurrection of Christ. But it is by his resurrection that we feel assured we have rightly interpreted that evidence. And it is in itself a far stronger and more satisfactory proof. Strike that away, then, and how can the other stand? If the stronger be fallacious, who shall dare to rest on the weaker the whole weight of his immortal hopes? What might have satisfied us, not knowing of this best proof, cannot satisfy us, having known it, and finding that it must be abandoned. Here, then, are indeed tremendous consequences. Here is our existence cut down from eternity to an average of less than threescore years and ten. The being which we held in the faith of its capability of indefinite expansion is compressed within the limits of a span. The gold within our very grasp becomes vile dross. The slumber of the grave becomes eternal destruction. And can the clear, and reasoning, and expanding, and aspiring mind of man submit to this conclusion? True, a future state and the resurrection of Christ are linked together. True, if his resurrection is a fiction, vain are our immortal expectations. But it is true, also, that if we cannot renounce those expectations; if we cannot extinguish those hopes; if we cannot disprove that immortality,—then this connection, this standing or falling together, this mutuality of dependence and of proof, in upraising our faith in futurity, upraises also our conviction of his resurrection. "If Christ be not raised, they that have fallen asleep in Christ are perished." But they that have fallen asleep in Christ, and such as they, cannot have perished. God never made such beings to be annihilated. Their mental and moral faculties did not commence so admirably the development of which they were capable, so soon to be eternally withered. Their noble sacrifices for man's good were not made to be ever unrecompensed, save by insult, ignominy, persecution, and martyrdom. The water of life of which they drank was not the mere mirage of the desert. They were not indebted to a falsehood for comfort in their troubles and strength in their exertions. They have not perished; and if not, then Christ is risen. He is "the first-fruits of them that sleep."

5. If Christ be not risen, then vain is our faith in the moral government of God.

That there is a God that judgeth in the earth; that he loveth righteousness and hateth iniquity; that he is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him; and that the prevalence of truth and good are the objects of his providence,—these are the foundations of religion. These, too, like the doctrine of a future state, have their first glimmerings in nature, their full daylight in the gospel. To these we apply the same argument. If the stronger proof and clearer illustration be fallacious, we dare not rely on the weaker; we must sit down in darkness and sorrow, with no friend in the world, no Father in heaven, no hope in the grave. The gospel is the most glorious manifestation that ever was made of two principles of Divine government—the power of truth above error, the connection of goodness with felicity. In the early history of Christianity we behold Truth in the most disadvantageous circumstances; struggling, with all the seeming chances of the world against it; the worldly policy of the powerful, and the worldly wisdom of the crafty; the sage ridiculing it as folly, and the priest denouncing it as impious; the weak shunning it, the proud scorning it; hostile to private interests, and a mark for the crushing weight of public authority to break to atoms. And yet it triumphed, and became the faith of the enlightened and civilised world. The denier of the resurrection says that falsehood did this. Then we ask, when truth ever did the like? And how can there be a divine government protecting truth, and ruling by it in men's hearts? Must that be denied too? Will not the common sense of man stop there, return, and deem it less rational to regard falsehood as the ruling principle over the world, than to believe in the power of truth and the government of God?

"If in this life only we have hope in Christ," said the apostle, "we are of all men most miserable." The righteous Governor must have rewards for the morally obedient. What an exhibition were the first Christians of "the powers of the world to come"! How heaven and earth, duty and recompense, present suffering and future glory, were united and blended in their minds, raising them above the world, and making them willing martyrs for its good! Poor deceived creatures, if Christ rose not! There is an end of the hopes and of the strength of goodness. Truth then resolves itself into the proposition, that virtue is but a name: and

morality into, "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die." Goodness then may take her unequal chance in the world with selfishness, cunning, and violence; with the example before it of the best having been the most vilely treated. It would provoke a smile for its absurdity, were it not fitter for a tear by its wretchedness, to see what must be believed if the resurrection of Christ be not believed. Oh! who can hesitate? There is, there must be, a Divine government. It is "the fool" that "hath said in his heart, There is no God." It must be infatuation to reject a God rather than admit a Saviour. And Christ spoke the words of eternal reason when he said, "Ye believe in God, believe also in me."

6. If Christ be not risen, then vain is our faith in the power of moral exhortation.

"If ye be risen with Christ," fitly introduces the exhortation to "seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God;" and never has moral exhortation had so much power on any other system; little power could it have on any were this fact now to be exploded as a falsehood. If it be so, where shall we turn for those simple, comprehensive, authoritative precepts, which raise us at once to the first principles of goodness, and make us masters of its details and its essence? If it be so, where shall we find that living pattern of our duty which we may safely trust, which ever leads us onward, which is the moral law embodied in human flesh and blood, the path of perfection traced by the brother of mankind? If it be so, where shall we find the teacher whose mild persuasion wins the sinner from the error of his ways, humbling the proud and raising the lowly, full of gracious promise, but promise not more gracious than certain, authenticated by the seal of Omnipotence in his miracles, and whose words of love were the words of our eternal Father? And if it be so, where shall we find the example of his own doctrine of a life after death, the exhibitor in his own person of man's immortality, one who is entered into heaven as our forerunner, the judge of quick and dead, whom we are to show that we love by doing his commandments of righteousness and mercy? These are the gospel pledges of morality. It makes us "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners;" "do unto others as we would that they should do

unto us;" and strive to "be perfect, even as our Father in heaven is perfect." These are the best pledges of morality. In their destruction there could be none of like power substituted for them. We must believe that it is left without certainty, without pattern, without force, or we must believe in the resurrection of Christ. If we make shipwreck of faith, the interests of morality must be thrown overboard. Again man recoils. Again the consequences of the supposition are inconsistent and revolting. Again we fly from them to the gospel refuge; and there let us rest. If to deny the resurrection be inconsistent, its reception is intellectual harmony. If to deny the resurrection be to endanger the downfall of human goodness, to receive it is to build the edifice of righteousness on the rock of truth. If to deny the resurrection be painful and wretched, its reception is rich in peace of mind, in holy joy, and in an immortal and unbounded hope that maketh not ashamed. May He who this day brought again from the dead the Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, enclose us in his fold, and pour out on our hearts these blessings, and accept our songs of gratitude, our resolutions of obedience, and our aspirations after the glory of his eternal kingdom! Amen.

Sermon XXXVI.

The Jews' Account of the Resurrection.

"Now when they were going, behold some of the watch came into the city, and showed unto the chief priests all the things that were done. And when they were assembled with the elders and had taken counsel, they gave large money unto the soldiers, saying, Say ye, his disciples came by night, and stole him away while we slept. And if this come to the governor's ears, we will persuade him, and secure you. So they took the money, and did as they were taught: and this saying is commonly reported among the Jews until this day" (Matt. xxviii. 11-15).

Such was the Jewish version of our Saviour's resurrection. If it be thought, on the one hand, improbable that God should raise a man from the dead, it is surely not very probable, on the other, that the chief authorities of the nation, backed by an armed force, should be baffled in this way with impunity. The absurdities of the story are many and obvious.

The sepulchre of Christ was not like our graves, but an excavation in the side of a rock, closed in front with a large stone, on which, together with the rock, the priests had fixed a seal, so that it could not be moved without discovery. The guard seems to have consisted of Roman soldiers, who were stationed there by Pilate's permission, but under the immediate authority of the priests, by whose direction they circulated the report here recorded. I shall briefly enumerate its inconsistencies.

1. The short time the soldiers had to watch makes their sleeping improbable. They were frequently relieved. There were four watches in the course of the night. The transaction in question, being about, or just before, sunrise, was most likely soon after the watch had been changed for the third time. If but a single individual had been on duty, the chances were against the statement being true: but,

2. There were several. We know not exactly how many; but the circumstances imply that there were several, and it would doubtless be so, to provide against force as well as fraud. That all should sleep passes belief; especially when we advert to,

3. The severity of the Roman discipline, which made the offence capital, as it is generally, if not universally, in systems of military discipline. He is little likely to sleep soundly, even after much more weariness than they were exposed to, who knows that it will consign him to his last sleep.

4. It is a preposterous circumstance that they are not only represented to have slept, but are made to bear testimony to what passed in the mean time. They affirm, not as inference, but as fact, that then the disciples came and stole the body. On their own showing, they could know nothing of the matter. They must have been in two states at once—asleep, or they would have resisted the theft; awake, or they could not have witnessed it.

5. Had they really lost the body by such negligence, is it probable they would have confessed it? Would they have thus exposed themselves to punishment from their own officers? Would they have had no apprehensions of the anger of the priests, who were so acute and vindictive, with whom it was such an object to have the remains of Christ

in their power, and who could easily have procured their destruction from Pilate? To have drawn this on themselves would have been an excess of folly. These improbabilities relate to the soldiers: others arise from the state of the disciples.

6. To have got possession of the body by violence could have answered no purpose whatever. The conflict must have been notorious, and it would have covered with contempt any testimony to a pretended subsequent resurrection.

7. They were too poor to bribe the soldiers, especially when the risk is remembered. They could shield them from neither the Jewish nor the Roman authorities, but must in the end have perished with them under the vengeance of one or the other.

8. Time and place are against any such transaction. It was the time of the passover, full moon, and in the immediate vicinity of Jerusalem. If they could have eluded, or bribed, or destroyed the soldiers, still the chances of observation were innumerable, and observation was detection, and detection the destruction of the whole plan.

9. The state of confusion, apprehension, and surprise in which they were plunged by the death of their Master, makes it very unaccountable that an attempt so daring, requiring so much coolness for its formation, and so much adventurous coöperation for its execution, should on the sudden have originated with them, and been actually accomplished.

10. They must have been—were the story true, and Christ not the character he professed—either his confederates or his dupes. If the latter, his death must have opened their eyes, turned their wrath on him, and made them very indisposed to brave further suffering on his account. If the former, that his real death and a sham resurrection should have been part of the original plan is inconceivable; and the stunning effect of what had happened remains in force as an objection to their having engaged in any such enterprise as that ascribed to them.

11. The current notion of the Jews, of which they previously partook, was, undoubtedly, that of a temporal Messiah. To this the resurrection brought them no nearer.

For that purpose,—the only one we can suppose them then to have entertained,—it was altogether a gratuitous and useless fiction, and yet most dangerous.

12. Is it credible that, were this tale true, all parties should have escaped punishment?—that neither the disciples for the theft, nor the soldiers for its permission, should have been subjected to legal visitation? Such an escape is wholly inconsistent with the character of the Jewish rulers, had they not in their hearts apprehended that the result would be a confirmation of the fact.

This tale, then, only serves by its inconsistency to confirm the reality of the resurrection. Common sense must immediately and strongly decide for the latter.

Perhaps it may be said, that this was not the Jewish explanation, but a Christian invention to fasten disgrace on them by its absurdity.

I reply, the writer asserts its currency at the time when he produced his work. I confess I think that this may possibly be a marginal note which has crept into the text, and not an indication of the late date—thirty years after the resurrection—which some assign to this gospel, for it has in other parts clear evidence of a much earlier origin. Still the argument is the same. It was an assertion of contemporaneous opinion which could not have been made in the face of fact. Whenever the gospel was written, or the annotation affixed, such was the Jewish explanation. Our conclusion is strengthened by the circumstance that Matthew's was peculiarly the Jewish gospel.

Besides, to some such tale the priests must have had recourse from the nature of the case. It is certain that Christians have always asserted the resurrection of Christ —it is this which constitutes Christianity; and also that they were the minority, and severely treated by those in power. It is also clear that the body of Christ, if not revived, must have been left within the reach of their enemies; that its production would have stifled Christianity; and that no such production ever took place. Some excuse like that in the text must therefore have been advanced. There was no alternative but between some such plea and the admission of the fact of the resurrection. This is an incidental confirmation of the veracity of the historian.

We pass now to some considerations on the exhibition of human character, of human guilt and folly unhappily, which the narrative involves. It is a record of ambition, avarice, and ignorance, in the priests, the soldiers, and the Jewish people.

It shows the recklessness of ambition. The thirst of power, temporal and spiritual, was the dominant passion of those at the head of the Jewish priesthood. The time had been when the high priest was also the supreme and independent ruler of the Jewish state. The Roman method of respecting to a great extent the laws, customs, and institutions of their dependencies, left still a large share of authority to the Sanhedrim, especially when they could also preserve popularity and the control of public opinion. Jealousy of encroachments on their influence, and eagerness for its extension, made them the mortal enemies of Christ, and urged them on to all the crimes involved in taking his life and persecuting his followers. They struggled for a great earthly prize, and in their madness would contend for it even against heaven. Truth has little respect, innocence little protection, against such bodies of men, so infuriated. What atrocities have not been perpetrated in all ages to acquire, retain, or extend power! How has the voice of truth been stifled, the peace of nations immolated, and the name of social order and of religion profaned! The leaders in the ranks of reformation have almost invariably been sacrificed. Such is the corruption of power. So dangerous is it for man to be vested with, or to set his heart upon, a little brief authority. So black are the crimes into which he will rush, so base are the meannesses to which he will descend, when goaded by the lust of power. The professed object for which it is to be exercised, when attained, is the public welfare, and yet for its attainment those principles of truth and justice are sacrificed which are the great basis on which the public good must rest. What more awful voice of warning can there be against the violence of ambitious passion than that the priests of Judea would have destroyed and disgraced the most virtuous of the human race, would have discredited a miraculous fact, would have blotted man's hope of endless life, to secure, for themselves or their order, the paltry domination of that petty province?

If less atrocious, yet surely more base, is the disposition which made the Roman soldiery their ready tools. It is difficult to conjecture how far they understood, or what they thought of, the transaction of which they were partly witnesses. Some, probably, were so far affected by it as to become Christians; and they might furnish the apostles with the circumstances here stated. Others, with their Pagan notions of supernatural persons and events, with all the popular and poetical legends of their native mythology in their minds, might suppose that here was really the interposition of a god, and yet not attach any extraordinary importance to it, so as to withhold them from taking the bribe and disguising the truth. Their deities, and their expected futurity, if they expected any, were not of a description to give any formidable check to the circulation of falsehood for the gratification of avarice. Such low vices are the agency by which loftier criminality works. The greediness of wealth, when in full strength, will swallow any indignity, and fawn on power, and flatter ambition, and falsify any fact that interferes with its indulgence. It is degrading through all its degrees and in all its modifications. The worship of Mammon is baser in its influence than even the reptile idolatry of Egypt; and, unhappily, has possessed a much wider extension, a much longer duration. It yet braves the power that threw down the statues of Jupiter, the thunderer, and desecrated his temples. It cannot coexist with real Christianity, but it readily harmonises with nominal Christianity, or with any other system that prevails, so long as it may pursue its own ends. It licks any hand that feeds it. It will uphold any authority, and conform to any religion, that does not proscribe it, or whose proscriptions may be evaded. It is the purchasable tool of any artist who will give its price, however nefarious the deed for which he requires its instrumentality. Let any one whom it has ever seduced, though but a hair's breadth, from the path of rectitude, gaze earnestly on the foul pit to which it would draw, and wherein it would plunge him, and recoil from the abyss, and shudder at his danger, and retrace his way, and bind the law of truth and honesty on his erring but not yet corrupted heart.

It is painful to pursue a course where only the dark

sides of human nature are in succession presented to our view; but we must notice the ignorance and credulity of the people, by which alone either the prompters or repeaters of this fabrication could anticipate success. They must have reckoned that the multitude would not examine; that boldness of assertion, and the countenance of authority, would overpower the voice of honest testimony; that the influence of station would make up for the deficiencies of an inconsistent narrative; that the perils of truth would be the security of falsehood; that any inconvenient publicity of an opposing nature might be repressed and stifled; and that credulity would embrace, or fear submit to, or indolence be satisfied with, any explanation which they chose to afford and deigned to circulate. Without this expectation, all was labour lost; they calculated, as temporal and spiritual ambition does always calculate, on the facility of controlling or cajoling the mass of mankind. The enemies of the human race have always a base opinion of human nature; they are strong in its weaknesses, great by its littleness, flourishing by its corruption, glorious in its subjugation, but baffled by its virtues, and confounded by its progress. The success of the Jewish rulers was considerable, but it was partial and temporary. Their absurd saying was currently "reported among the Jews" for many a year; those who contradicted and disbelieved it were furiously persecuted: but what then? The truth ultimately became manifest to numbers; the adherents of the falsehood maintained it to their own destruction; the civil polity of those who sought to rule by it lasted but for that generation, and then experienced an awful and terrible dissolution; and the imperial throne of those who sold themselves to tell it became the prize of hypocrisy fighting under the banner of the cross; while the fabrication itself only exists to posterity in the Christian record, a monument of the infamy of its inventors and promulgators. Still we must lament that it had any prevalence, however brief,—any power, for a moment, to obstruct the reception of facts, discredit the testimony of veracity, and obscure the light of truth. It shows how important it is that the public mind should be disciplined to inquiry and examination. It shows the danger of that deference to authority which proportions credence to the station of the assertor,

and not to the rationality of the assertion. It illustrates the interest which all have in truth, and the peril of hastily concluding of any fact or principle, that it is mere matter of speculation, and we may as well be quietly content with common notions. It inculcates the utility of universal education as a qualification for judging soundly on important matters, and consequently a security against deception. It teaches a lesson of gratitude for the wonderful multiplication, in our day, of the means by which information is diffused, publicity afforded, fabrication detected, and truth ascertained. It shows how short-lived are their triumphs whose hope is the baseness of mankind, and who rely on the selfishness of others to gratify their own. It exhibits Providence moving in darkness to the accomplishment of its benignant plans, and through the night of successful wickedness preparing the resurrection of virtue and of man. It inspires lively hope for the cause of knowledge, truth, goodness, of human improvement and happiness. And it is subservient to the evidences of that most momentous fact, which it was meant to discredit, the resurrection of Christ, which was the first-fruits of human immortality, and to be followed by the glorious harvest of the universal resurrection.

In spite of the opposing assertions, and, what was far more formidable, of the opposing power, to their testimony of their Master's revival, the apostles boldly persisted in the conscientious publication of that fact. They relied on the God of truth to protect them against evil consequences, or to give them strength to endure persecution here, and felicity hereafter to recompense their suffering. They judged well and acted wisely; generations hold their memories in reverence, and heaven prepared their thrones of glory. No timid, compromising feelings become the friends of truth and reformation, whenever truth is obstructed and reformation needed. They are objects to be pursued, with singleness of heart and entire devotion, through evil report and good report, in social union or solitary firmness, regardless of number, authority, antiquity, or any other of the imposing forms in which error may shroud itself to inspire a superstitious veneration. What the apostles did then for the resurrection of Christ, they would have done now for the unity and love of God. They who would not deny, or be

silent about, the resurrection of the Son, to placate the Jewish Sanhedrim, would not have denied, or have been silent about, the sole supremacy of the Father, to conciliate the authorities of any church or state in nominal Christendom. Their history is a lesson, in bold characters, of manliness in the profession of religious truth, consistency in maintaining it, and zeal in its dissemination.

And we may learn, not only from them, but from their disciples also, how we should deal with truth in our own hearts, as well as in the world. In the thousands who believed their word, it was as good seed bringing forth good fruit abundantly. Their admission of the resurrection of Christ was not the mere and bare allowance of a fact, but a practical principle of universal and constant application. Devotion became more fervent in the contemplation of this brightest instance of the paternal love of God for his creatures, even amid all their infirmities and sins. Benevolence became less bounded as in the resurrection, connected with the life, death, and doctrine of the Saviour, they learned that all were brethren in privilege as in nature, by religion as by blood, and in the hope of endless life as in the participation of the evils of mortality. Present advantages, so often a snare, and present calamities, so often a resistless terror, lost their power to seduce or frighten, as they dwelt upon the prospect of judgment and eternity. Themselves forgiven much, by the free mercy of God, thus sealed and confirmed, they practised forgiveness to a generous extent, unknown before, and reflecting the purest lustre on the gospel. Beholding in that event the mighty hand of God, outstretched for Christ and his cause, they consecrated themselves to that cause, in confidence of its being for the good of man, and under the protection and blessing of heaven. Taught by it that they were not to affect an ascetic piety which would take them out of the world, and yet that while in the world they were not to be of, but above it, in the purity of their principles, the elevation of their hopes, and the faithful discharge of all their duties, they adorned themselves with every social grace and virtue, and moved in unassuming usefulness and harmony, wherever their sphere was traced, in the diversified relations of human life. And knowing that, in the future existence on which their Master was entered,

not merely to have called him Lord, but to have done his righteous will, would secure his approval and their felicity, they cultivated universal holiness, and by aiming at the purity of heaven, made the only efficient preparation for its endless enjoyments.

Are we fellow-disciples with them? Let us go and do likewise.

Sermon XXXVII.—The Argument from the Resurrection of Christ to that of all Mankind.

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which, according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" (1 Peter i. 3).

It is a blessing to be born. Though the querulousness of disappointment may look on nature with a jaundiced eye, and behold in the world only a "waste howling wilderness;" though philosophy may pretend to discover and demonstrate essential defects in the constitution of things, indications of chance, weakness, or malignity, and permanent sources of misery and vice; though theology may dare to pronounce on every human being, at its birth, the terrific ban of an almighty and everlasting curse; nay, though when the mists of melancholy, sophistry, and superstition are cleared away, there may yet remain, in the sober estimate of reason, a fearful mass of evil, assailing even the feeble infant in the cradle, repressing the buoyancy of youth, severely tasking the full strength of maturity in mind and body, affecting every individual faculty, and mingling with all social relations, harassing the second childhood of age, and standing in insolent and seemingly final triumph on the grave,—yet is it a blessing to be born; and the joy which nature prompts, when a new torch of conscious being is kindled up, has a deeper foundation in rationality and truth than all the speculations which tend to obscure the Creator's love, and spread a cloud of gloom over his fair universe. Were we to take this world as all, it is yet a beautiful world, and the single faculty of beholding that beauty, the mere passive consciousness of its harmonious changes, would be enjoyment. To be a stone or a tree, or any thing most moveless on earth's surface, but

with consciousness, with a perception of the heavens above and the earth below, and the endless colourings of day and night, and the combinations, in vegetable form and animal life, of regular return yet boundless variety,—this were a blessing, were man born to nothing more. But when to this we add the faculties which he has in common with all the inferior tribes of animated being, through all their gradations; when from these we ascend to those nobler powers of reason which, whether the difference be in kind or only in degree, are his, and his alone, of all that dwell upon the earth; and when these are crowned by that social principle which links him to his fellow-men, and of which the results, as to intellect and feeling, are so incalculably extensive; when we see him connected not only with the living, but with the dead, and made the inheritor of the talents, and acquirements, and deeds, and inventions, and experience, of ages—though he were born but for seventy years, or not for half that period, and though this tide of greatness and of joy may roll many a wreck of hope or fancy to his feet, many a fragment, melancholy memorial of destroyed felicity, yet were it a blessing to have such an existence, even for an uncertain portion of that limited period, a blessing to exult in the possession of, and praise the Creator for his bounty in bestowing. Such is man's birth. But Providence has decreed, for many of the race at least, a second birth, the generation in the soul of an immortal hope. The rising of that thought in the mind; the growth of the thought into expectation; and the confirming of the expectation by rational evidence, till it becomes an assured and confident hope,—this is indeed an era worthy of the repetition, and with intenser feeling, of all the gratulation that welcomed the commencement of his mortal being; worthy of that boldness of eastern metaphor with which the apostles of Jesus delighted to describe the transition of their heathen converts from darkness to light, and from corruption to glory; and worthy of those strains of fervent and adoring thankfulness which they poured forth to the God and Father of Christ for his abundant mercy.

The object of Christian hope is immortal life, with all those adjuncts which can excite strong desire for its possession.

It is sometimes complained of, and sometimes objected to, the doctrine of a future state, that it is so completely foreign from all which our senses tell us, and so remote even from our mental conceptions, as to have little or no practical influence; in other words, that its punishments are incapable of acting upon our fears, or its rewards of calling forth our desires. The history of mankind tells a different tale, and replies to the objection by facts. It shows that the mere circumstance of futurity, a futurity beyond the boundaries of earth, time, and sense, is no real bar to the most powerful operations of good or ill upon the human mind. Millions have acted under such impulses, and so completely in defiance of present inducements, as to leave no doubt of the nature of their motives. At the near approach of death, the mind has been generally influenced by the notion of something beyond death. And long anterior to this, there is a point in human existence, varying with circumstances, when the individual seems naturally disposed to advert to futurity, and seek in it a stimulus for present conduct. The notion of the feebleness of the doctrine in question seems founded on the fallacy of taking an ignorant mind for the subject, and a philosophical idea of futurity for the motive. Then, indeed, it is feeble. It is too abstract and cold to affect one whose unnurtured and undeveloped intellect raises him comparatively little above the mere animal; but he would be as unaffected by the philosopher's notion of present happiness. It is not the circumstance of unseen futurity, but the kind of felicity, that fails to reach him. With a notion more congenial, be it reason or folly, truth or error, revelation or superstition, he is promptly drawn within its sphere, and strongly feels its tendency to excite or to alarm. And if that kind of reward loses its force as he becomes better informed, it is surely not because increased intelligence makes us think less of futurity. The growth of knowledge has an opposite tendency; and the most enlightened have only to employ their powers upon the subject to discover in the Christian revelation of futurity enough to rouse their strongest desires. There is a longing after immortality, even if it were the inert consciousness, the passive contemplation of a majestic universe, which we have described as the lowest kind of earthly being. It were something, only

in some moveless station to see more of the movements of the great machine which rolls on so ceaselessly, and mysteriously, and harmoniously, in its wonderful revolutions. It were something to be, though from but a single point of view, a witness of the works of God and the vicissitudes of existence, and drink in the same succession of delightful sensations from the same scene of loveliness to all eternity. But when the notion of everlasting consciousness is coupled with those of immunity from physical suffering; of continually progressive intelligence; of freedom from moral degradation; of the companionship of the objects of the heart's best affections; of the society of the pure, the wise, the devout, the benevolent; of active and successful beneficence; of the consummation of heaven's plans of mercy, and a growing knowledge and love of the Infinite Being of beings; surely an outline is described which, however imperfectly it may be filled up, contains whatever can most deeply interest the heart, and constitutes a hope full of blessedness and full of power.

The evidence of this hope, referred to by the apostle, is the resurrection of Christ. I refer to the bearing of that event on our resurrection, not to the proof of the fact itself. We are accustomed to connect his resurrection with our own, nor is this one of those associations of ideas of which no rational account can be given. The practice was founded on the Scriptures. The sacred writers did so continually, and on various grounds. The fact was given for us, as well as them, to reason upon; and there are several ways in which it bears upon the prospect of our future destiny.

The resurrection of Christ is of worth in the argument for a future life, even if we take only the bare fact, apart from every other consideration of religion, natural or revealed, with which it may be connected. In that most limited view, it would still be a suggestion of the hope of immortality. The lowest to which we can reduce the statement is this: there was once a man, of whom we suppose nothing more known, of whom it was ascertained that he revived from the grave to live for ever. Brutal indifference, at ease in its animal enjoyments, might say, What is that to us? And scepticism might urge as an objection the want of any obvious logical connection with our fate; but the general sense of mankind would not be so satisfied.

The fact would seem like the hint of a parent to a child of some great enjoyment, which would not have been so intimated unless to raise anticipation; nor that anticipation raised unless to be gratified. Had this been all, even that solitary seed of hope would have germinated, and beneath the shade and shelter of its branches would millions have rested from the toil of their mortal labours. Further, it would have demonstrated the possibility of such a revival. There would have been an end of the antagonistic proof set up by those who look scornfully down on the valley of death, and demand, "*Can* these dry bones live?" It would have been the decisive reply of Nature and of Providence to the inquiry, their decisive refutation of the implied assertion of impossibility. The theory of man's total and final destruction would have been put down by historical fact. Such an event is a declaration in broad and legible characters, if not that man shall, yet that he can and may live again. There would be an end of the system whose doctrine is annihilation, and whose precept is licentiousness.

The resurrection of Christ may be connected with the teachings of nature on a future state. I cannot see the conclusiveness of the reasoning sometimes employed to show that without the gospel we should have no hope of immortality. The gospel may, and does, furnish the simplest, the most generally intelligible, the most satisfactory proof; but there is besides, to my mind, amply sufficient to warrant that important conclusion. There is the existence of an expectation so general that we may almost call it universal; strengthening with the progress of the human mind, before which baseless reveries retire; so prevalent that it must either be the result of an instinct implanted by nature in our constitution, or of the most obvious reasoning from the most obvious principles, or the traditionary remain of a primeval revelation; there are the evident rudiments of a moral government in the earth, proceeding far enough to show us that such a government exists, but not far enough to assure us that the present state can comprise the whole of its operations; there is the capacity of man for boundless improvement, a capacity bestowed on all, but with which even those who make the highest attainments in knowledge and goodness are en-

dowed in vain, if those attainments be all; and there is the Divine benevolence, attested by ten thousand proofs, and every proof a presumptive evidence that for man there are yet nobler manifestations of it than this world affords. These are arguments of no small weight, taken separately; in combination they become far more imposing; and when, being combined, we proceed to connect them with the fact of an actual resurrection, they form a chain of evidence not easily broken, a moral demonstration which cannot very reasonably be denied or doubted.

The resurrection of Christ may be regarded as probative of a future life, in connection with his own previous teachings on that subject. In all the disputes, and they seem innumerable, about what Christ taught, this remains undenied and undeniable, that he taught man's living again. Enemies concede it; friends maintain it; and the most opposite sects are united in the assertion. The doctrine existed before, among both Jews and heathens; but it existed in a form essentially different. They had it as an inference, deduced more or less rationally from premisses of which they were more or less assured; but they had it not in the form which he gave it, of an authoritative declaration from one who had a title to make such declaration. It could not be so advocated by the sages of heathenism; and it had not been so advocated by the prophets of Judea. It appears in some of their writings, but never as a divine revelation of which they were the authorised promulgators. In this, then, Jesus of Nazareth was, as a teacher, perfectly original. His language was unprecedented. He severed himself from, he placed himself above, all other moral instructors. He stood forth alone, the authoritative teacher of man's immortality. Proof, proof, is the demand, the vehement demand, excited by such pretensions; and there it is. He himself rose from the grave, to die no more. How appropriate are the doctrine and the miracle! How well the fact harmonises with the instruction! How gloriously did the event illustrate and confirm the declaration!

The resurrection of Christ may be connected with the teachings of his apostles. They were the heralds of a future life to all the nations of the earth. They proclaimed it to Jew and Gentile, Theists and idolaters, bond

and free, the civilised and the savage. They went as his messengers to publish the glad tidings of immortality. And what were their credentials? Where was the seal of their commission? The resurrection of their Master. To that they pointed as authority; and it was authority. Providence by that event had given a previous sanction to their doctrine, as it was a closing attestation to his doctrine. It had laid the basis of their system, and, by its adaptation to the purpose, sanctioned the superstructure which they raised thereon. They were the agents of one who, having directed their proceedings, had personally exemplified the truth he commanded them to inculcate. The facts that he rose, and that his apostles taught a universal resurrection, form, thus connected, another satisfactory presage of our destiny.

But the most conclusive argument from the resurrection of Christ to that of all mankind is that derived from our common nature, and our common relation to the same paternal God; the former part of which is dwelt upon by Paul to the Corinthians: "As by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead;" and the latter intimated by Christ himself in the expression, "I ascend unto my Father and your Father, to my God and your God." Grant that all men stand in the same relation to the Deity,—and as this is the plain assertion of the scripture in many places, so is it also the dictate of nature and reason,—they are alike dependent on Him for their physical and moral being; He is the author of both; His love is the source of their existence, and determines the end of their existence, and is therefore impartial, equal, eternal, and universal: grant this, and grant also that Jesus was one of us,—and that he was, not only do the sacred writers testify, by so describing him, but when they reason they imply that fact in their arguments, and when they record they imply it in their narratives; reducing us to the alternative of invalidating both their theological conclusions and their historical testimony, unless we affirm that he was man and like unto his brethren,—grant these two positions, neither of which can be fairly contested, that he was a man, and that all men stand in the same relation to God; and the argument from his resurrection to ours becomes perfect and resistless. For, all bearing

the same relation, if one be immortal, all must. A mortal man and an immortal man would not be in the same relation to God. He would not be alike their God and Father. Those terms must be strengthened for the one, or enfeebled for the other. Their identity is inconsistent with any such disparity as that of this life only, and an eternal being. If of any one man we ascertain the fact of his living for ever, we ascertain it of the whole human race. The resurrection of Christ decides the question.

Of this last argument it may indeed be said, that it goes much further; and if it prove any thing at all, establishes not only the immortality of all men, but also their final happiness. It does go that length; but it is not the less to be admitted, if valid, on account of that conclusion. It does go that length; but it is not the less a scriptural argument, intimated by Peter, amplified by Paul, and suggested by our Lord himself. It does go that length; but it is not the less in accordance with the best notions we can gain of the extent of the Divine benevolence, the energy of Divine power, the principles on which the moral government of God is conducted, and the consummation in which the triumphs of Christianity shall terminate. It does go that length; but it is not the less welcome to the pure and benevolent mind which has imbibed the spirit of Jesus, and learned from him to worship the Deity as the Universal Father, and to love mankind as brethren.

Whether, therefore, we take the bare fact of the resurrection of Jesus, or regard it as a providentially designed suggestion of the hope of immortality, or as a refutation of the sometimes alleged impossibility of man's surviving the grave, or add it to the dictates of nature and reason on the same topic, or connect it with the doctrine which was previously taught by him, or with that which was subsequently proclaimed by his apostles,—it forms in every point of view a confirmation of the truth, that we shall live again; and to all these views of the fact we have to add that of the identity of our nature and relation to the Deity with his, in which, even taken alone, it is complete and decisive proof. And the fair process is to combine the whole, in which combination it presents a solid rock on which the soul may safely rest.

Blessed be God for his unspeakable gift! His gift is,

not only the actual immortality, but the hope, in whatever way men arrive at the conviction. If from observation of the universe around, that universe is his work, the glorious trophy which he has reared of his own almighty benignity. If from the study of our own minds and hearts within, he strung the chords of intellect and feeling, and all the harmony which they emit is from the breathings of his spirit over them. If from the recorded facts of divine revelation, they are yet more obviously the interpositions of his abundant mercy for man's salvation. His, then, be the acclamations of our united voices, and the silently invoked blessing of our inmost hearts.

For the influence of Christian hope, seek the couch of affliction, the house of mourning, or the scene of temptation. No friend so gently wipes away the tears of sorrow; no champion so strongly battles with passion or temporal interest, quelling their power, and quenching the fiery darts of evil. Especially does it avail in relation to those benevolent efforts which it is needful that the friends of man should make for the amelioration of their species, but which lack the encouragement of present success. How much there is of most important good to be done on earth, which no individual, which no combination of contemporary efforts, can effect; for which the exertion must be continued from generation to generation; where one sows and another reaps; where man labours knowing that only a remote posterity shall enter into his labours! How comparatively faint is the inducement to such exertions, save on Christian principles, and under the animating influence of Christian hope! That identifies the individual with his species. Though ages may elapse before the harvest of his labours shall be gathered in, yet those who shall bring home its sheaves with rejoicing are one with him; they are his future contemporaries, friends, brethren. Easily does he now associate himself in fancy with those with whom he shall ultimately be associated in fact, to all eternity. He has a common interest and cause with all mankind, though their lot be in the remotest ages. Hope nerves his philanthropy; and however distant the recompense of success, he takes his allotted portion of the toil, strong in a religion which thus nobly vindicates its supremacy as the source of both temporal and everlasting blessings to the human race.

Sermon XXXVIII.

Appearances of Christ after his Resurrection.

"To whom also he showed himself alive after his passion (suffering) by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God" (Acts i. 3).

Human nature is always and every where essentially the same; the Creator of men has fashioned their hearts alike; and amid all the varieties of station and talent, or the more momentous varieties of moral character, a vast sum still remains of common properties and feelings, by which the attentive observer may argue from himself to others; knowing his own heart, he knows the world; and if he cannot wholly overcome, yet he may materially lighten, the difficulty of putting himself in the place of those who lived in different times and circumstances, and of entering, in imagination, into their thoughts and sensations. In the workings of a thousand minds, in the beatings of a thousand hearts, there is yet a harmony resulting from the common principles of our nature, of which they are the modified operations. The identity of man rises above the diversity of circumstances. Hence, unlike as was the situation of the apostles, between the resurrection and the ascension of Christ, to that of any human beings since the world began, we may yet form conjectures, neither unreasonable nor improbable, as to their sensations in the intercourse with their great Master which they held during that period. The first accounts of the resurrection astounded and bewildered them. They were too much overcome even for joy to be their first sensation. They were like men immured in darkness, when their prison-walls are suddenly thrown down, and day blazes instantly on their unprepared sight. Then succeeded an intense curiosity as to the fact. Their minds were craving for evidence. No one would trust any body's senses but his own; and some scarcely knew when their own had received sufficient demonstration. He who saw Christ last, and whose sight of him had been preceded by the concurring testimony of all his colleagues, yet required more than they did to whom he first appeared. As this emotion wore off, they must have felt some curiosity as to the new state of existence on

which he had entered. They had proofs of his identity, yet was there with it a diversity, the appearances of that great change by which the mortal is transformed into the immortal. Already, in a natural as well as in a moral sense, though he was in the world, he was not of the world. He wore the livery of heaven, and belonged to the fellowship of angels, and his earthly had become, or was becoming, a spiritual body, of finer texture, larger power, and more enduring date. What had been miracle was nature now, and his occasional appearances and final secession from their society have more the air of voluntary operations than of the special interference of Omnipotence. He was become the denizen of a far and glorious country, and only a stranger here; nor could they be wholly unsolicitous about the region in which he had promised to prepare their place. With the instructions he then gave, their minds were opened, and a rapid change and elevation were proceeding in their views of the throne he was to erect, and the work they had to do. New thoughts were rushing on them, and the order of a new creation was rising in their minds. With this a feeling of melancholy would soon mingle itself, as they anticipated his being taken from them. Notwithstanding all the grandeur and magnitude of the opening scene, that cloud would flit across, and dim its brightness. They had a dependence on him so complete, as well as an affection for him so strong, that this second loss, more expected than the first, would seem like the destitution of the orphan. Each meeting might be the last; each lesson, the final instruction; each gift of knowledge, make up their allotted talent, the improvement of which would be left to themselves, with which they were to gain other talents, and present them doubled at his coming. Nor is the interest of what passed in that period confined to them, or only recorded to complete the narrative. It has its worth for us also. I shall enumerate the several appearances of Christ between his resurrection and ascension, as gathered from a comparison of the different accounts, and make some remarks on the instruction which they afford to us and Christians of all ages. Nine distinct interviews of Christ with some or other of his followers are mentioned.

1. To Mary Magdalene. From Matthew it would seem that the other Mary was with her; but the other

accounts, especially that of John, are so circumstantial, that we must presume this a mistake, or a confounding of the first with a subsequent appearance. She found the tomb empty, and, fearing the body was removed to be insulted, remained near the spot weeping. Even the voice of Christ was not recognised by her, till his calling her by name, probably in the tone of kindness to which she had been accustomed, spoke the joyful conviction to her heart.

2. Towards evening of the same day he joined two disciples travelling to Emmaus, and, while yet unknown, explained to them the prophecies of the Messiah, until in the breaking of bread he discovered himself and departed.

3. Late in the evening of the day of the resurrection, when these persons had hastened back to Jerusalem and informed the ten apostles (Thomas being absent) and some disciples with them, he suddenly joined them; showed that he was not an incorporeal demon; on this (or a later) occasion partook of food, and instructed them as to the powers they should afterwards exercise.

4. On that day se'nnight he again appeared in their assembly, and removed the doubts of Thomas with one of those mild rebukes where censure is welcome for the sake of the kindness that shines around it.

5. In Galilee, where they had gone by his direction. John says, "This is now the third time that Jesus showed himself to his disciples, after that he was risen from the dead:" meaning to the apostles as a body, or a considerable portion of them. At this interview occurred the conversation with Peter, when he predicted the martyrdom of that apostle. This was in the morning, on the banks of the lake of Tiberias.

6. On a mountain in Galilee, by appointment, recorded only by Matthew; when he commanded them to proclaim the glad tidings to all nations.

7 and 8. The interview with James mentioned by Paul, and that with five hundred at once; of which the evangelists give no account: and,

9. With the apostles, when he gave his final instructions, and was parted from them.

The circumstances of these appearances are very unlike the tales which have sometimes gained temporary credence and currency about the visitation of the spirits of the

dead. They are generally enveloped in mystery, solitude, and darkness. It is in the dead of night that their pale shapes are fancied to stalk abroad; when imposition is easy, the senses are scarcely to be trusted, and reason sleeps while fancy or terror wake to play their revels. Often are they resolvable into the upbraidings of a guilty conscience. That is supposed to be without, which is only within; to be seen by the eye, which is only formed by the mind. It is characteristic of them to appear but to one person, and that the most interested, the most likely to be deluded by the magic of passion or imagination. His senses are not corrected and confirmed by those of others; independent testimony is precluded or contradicted. They "come like shadows, so depart," admitting but a distant and unsatisfactory intercourse. Their agency has seldom extended beyond purposes trifling as occasions for such deviations from the course of nature. And frequently the solitary witness is under the, perhaps unheeded, influence of disease, which disturbs the agency of his senses and falsifies his perceptions. In all these points the narrative before us is directly the reverse of the tales of superstition. If our Lord appeared in the evening, it was when several were together, with whom he held important and familiar conversation. Some of the more remarkable interviews were in the morning, prolonged into the full blaze of day. His bleeding form might have been depicted by the conscience of his enemies; but it was not like the work of superstition for his bodily frame to be touched by the hands of friends. He ate and drank with them, and continued his earthly task of enlightening them, that they might be the enlighteners of the world. Never were there such circumstances in the promptings of fancy, or such method in madness, or such success in fraud, or such consistency in the testimony of a fictitious and superstitious tale of the returning dead. No feeling had prepared and predisposed their minds. Hope was dismissed from their hearts; indeed, this direction their hopes had never taken. No superstition facilitated imposition; no terror prevented examination: their prejudices fought the battle of scepticism, and yielded only to overpowering proof. The narrative is unique, and no more to be classed with legendary stories in itself than in the evidence by which it is commended to a rational credence.

These appearances of Christ cast some light—and though but faint, it is all we have from fact, and therefore valuable—on the mode of our future being.

We read nothing of an immaterial soul in Christ. There is nothing told of what he thought, suffered, or did between his crucifixion and resurrection; for this plain reason, I apprehend, that there was nothing to tell. It is true, if there had been, it could not have been known to the apostles but by his communication: and would he not have communicated it? Who witnessed the temptation in the wilderness? And is any purpose answered by that, greater than by the revelation and miraculous confirmation of a separate state? A resurrection of the man is the doctrine here plainly taught by the fact, and nothing more. Theologians have attempted to fill up the void. Some say, that in the interim he went to heaven, and others, that he descended to hell; some, that he was actively employed in freeing imprisoned souls; and others, that he was triumphing with the patriarchs; and others, that he was insulting the devils. But these are all apocryphal, and the silence of scripture countenances the notion that we live again by a resurrection, a transformation, the production, perhaps, of a spiritual body from its germ in the natural body. The accounts display a kind of existence superior to ours. There are no indications that the ordinary means of supporting life were necessary to him. He only partook of food to prove his corporeality. There were no remains of the debility of frame which his agony indicated, and which his revival, without a great change, must have left. The hope is suggested of an immortality of undecaying strength, free from the weariness, weakness, and disease of the present state. We have a glimpse into a world where, literally, there is neither old man nor infant of days; where the scythe of time shall be broken, and death shall die; where the only change shall be a progression of good.

There is a striking identity of character in what is related of Christ before and after his death and resurrection. Many of the incidents are peculiarly adapted to show those pure and generous dispositions which raised him so far above the spirit of his age and country, which it is so impossible to account for by the influence of external and

visible circumstances, and which impress us with so much of wonder and of love at the same time. Such was his early appearance to Mary, as, disappointed in her voluntary, and in some degree, probably, dangerous work of honouring his body by embalming it, she wept near the empty sepulchre. Such—when we remember how speedily it followed upon Peter's apostasy, while his tears of bitter penitence had perhaps not ceased to flow, and when, dreading to meet again the gaze of his nominally abjured Master, even joy for the resurrection must else have been dashed with anguish and apprehension—was the injunction of the angel, "Tell his disciples, *and Peter*, that he goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see him." And such his own conversation with that apostle, in which the thrice-asked question, "Lovest thou me?" gently reminded Peter of his fault, displayed his present penitence and humility, and introduced the most affectionate and honourable commission of trust and confidence. Such was his condescension to the doubts and demands of Thomas and others. Such his injunction—and gloriously does the recollection of all that he had so unjustly suffered illustrate its benevolence — to "preach repentance and remission of sins among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem." And when he was taken from them, when the impervious veil fell which divides the mortal from the immortal world, he retired in the act of love and majesty and piety, bestowing his powerful benediction on his followers—"while he blessed them he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven." It is not merely the moral beauty of all this that is remarkable. That indeed is most true to reason. There are passions which cannot survive the grave; there are imperfections in the best which assuredly will not. The spirits of just men shall be perfected; and when we imagine an intercourse with one no longer interested in our lower sphere but by benevolence, I think we shall perceive in these occurrences every feature of correctness and presumption of truth. But it is not merely the excellence, but the identity, that I would remark. We all hope to become such as he then was; but he was only what he always had been. There is not only moral excellence, but that peculiar and most lovely form of it which he had previously displayed, and the portraiture of which makes the gospel so original,

so inimitable, so self-demonstrative, and above the possibility of invention.

There is a delightful sensation in contemplating this unchanged brotherhood of feeling in the most exalted of our race. In the Lord of life, the anointed of God, the first-born from the dead, higher than the kings of the earth, the image of the Father, and judge of the world, we yet see the amiable man of Nazareth. The possessor of glory and immortality had not only all the general benevolence, but all the particular affections, of the victim of suffering and death. Each pure and kind disposition, all that we call humanity, revived with him from the grave as a part of his constitution, as belonging to his moral self. This furnishes a caution against the two great errors that men have fallen into in their speculations on a future state. Some have carried forward to it even the grossnesses of man, and made their very heaven an appeal to his baser passions. They have decorated their paradise with the tinsel of earthly magnificence, and polluted it with the promised gratification of animal appetites. They have strangely tried to encourage virtue here by the anticipated relaxation of its bonds hereafter. They have made the motive and the duty at war, so that performance of the one involved insensibility to the other. They have adapted heaven to man, not at his best, but at his worst. The opposite mistake is the supposed obliteration of all feeling or desire save the love of God. Many Christians expect the absorption in this of every thought, emotion, recollection, and attachment. The recognition of our friends and relatives has been doubted. Nay, what is far more repugnant, a complete reconciliation has been imagined with the eternal misery of those who were nearest and dearest here, if unconverted; and even exultation in that display of the Divine glory which a horrid system finds in such a sacrifice to the worse than Moloch attribute of vindictive justice. Such Christians surely forget not only that Christ and his apostles have referred to heaven as a state of social happiness, which implies the survival and exercise of the social affections, and is founded on their strength and permanency; but that he himself showed after his resurrection the tenderest recollection and feeling for John the beloved disciple, for Peter the ardent though erring

friend, and for Judea his ungrateful country, but his country still. And it will be thus with ourselves. The worthy companions of earth will not be estranged from us in heaven. There can be no love of God destructive of love for the works of God; no knowledge of the parent that shall pour oblivion over the children. His brighter presence will not imply their absence. They who share with us the conflict will also be with us in the triumph. When we bow before the eternal throne, by our side will they kneel too; and when we raise the song of eternal thanksgiving, we shall listen, and not in vain, for their voices to swell and perfect the blissful harmony. And what must man become, where will his memory and sympathies be left, of what stuff will his immortal heart be made, and where will his moral identity be, if he shrink not from the eternal damnation of friend, child, or parent, nor ever feel one pang crossing his bosom and marring his enjoyment, nor look down on the gulf of reprobation and anguish but to exult in electing grace, nor linger as he turns to join the chant of praise? If death can work such a change, its agency is indeed infernal, and a strange preparation for beatitude. Learn from Jesus that nature survives the grave; that the seal of heaven upon our hearts, in all holy affections, shall be unobliterated, and its impression fresh and strong as ever; that if the doctrine of eternal torments be true, there can be no heaven, no state of unalloyed felicity, no state of felicity at all; an eternal fountain of evil as well as good, of agony as well as joy, would be opened in every bosom. There would be war in heaven—the deadliest war, that of conflicting and inextinguishable feelings. It cannot be. That doctrine must be foul and false. With the chastisement of the wicked the case is different. That can be no source of pleasure, as to the suffering it implies; but there is the hope of its termination; the knowledge that it is the only means of rendering its subjects capable of real happiness; and that the great Father of all is employing and directing it for that purpose; and probably the welcome agency of being his ministers in realising the glorious result. This we can imagine; it is consistent with nature; and it implies a progress of felicity.

Christ was parted from his apostles; but he promised his continued presence to the end of the Jewish world, age,

or dispensation; and he was with them by the spirit working miracles in his name. And there is a sense in which the promise is fulfilled to his real followers through all generations. Christ has been with them, and is with us, in the lively picture of his character, actions, sufferings, and exaltation, which we possess in the apostolic scriptures. By familiarity with them, we, too, seem to listen to the gracious words which flowed from his mouth, and gaze upon the wonders of his power. His gentleness and condescension sink into our hearts and win our love, as if we had been their objects personally; and in the consciousness of transgression, we shrink appalled from his fearful rebukes of the vices of the Pharisees. We become spectators, and deeply interested ones, of his conflicts with temptation, admiring his firmness and celebrating his victory; and we melt at the meekness of his endurance and his patient agony. We follow him to the cross: we behold that tomb, so vainly closed and sealed and guarded; we bless the morning of the resurrection; and raise the song of Moses and the Lamb in his honour who ascended to the right hand of the Majesty on high. There is a reality in the simple records of him which comes home to our understanding, our imaginations, and our hearts.

He is with his followers in the continuance of that faith and worship which he taught them. The spiritual worship of the Father vanishes, for many a page, from ecclesiastical history; it probably never vanished altogether from the world. He gave it to the nations, but long after nations abused the gift there were individuals who prized it as heaven's best bounty. And its depression was but temporary. It was an eclipse, not an extinction. From him have men learned to adore God as their parent, and regard each other, and all human beings, as brethren. He is with them and in them, in those acts of filial piety and fraternal charity. He is identified with those great and generous principles of religion which make his gospel its own witness, and demonstrate its truth by its excellence. Thus may he be always here, in the simplicity of our doctrine, the purity of our worship, the benevolence of our morality.

He is with us in that spirit of reform and amelioration of which he was so illustrious an example. When the voice of remonstrance is raised against ecclesiastical impositions,

and usurped dominion over conscience; when error is fearlessly exposed, and truth as fearlessly asserted; when persecution is endured for his name's sake, and for the cause of truth and righteousness; when men are called from their speculations and traditions to the doctrine of the primeval gospel; when ignorance is dispelled, and misery succoured, and improvement accelerated, and the human race benefited;—then is Christ present in spirit, and will be in all such efforts and blessings, to the world's end.

He is with us in those virtues, consolations, and hopes which are the genuine fruit of his word, the great end of his work. The grief of sincere repentance, the comfort of Divine forgiveness, the successful resistance of temptation, the supreme love of God, the humility and trust of adoration, the triumph of self-government, the flow of all social kindnesses, the adornment of all spiritual graces, resignation in sorrow, and calmness in death,—these are "Christ in us, the hope of glory."

Sermon XXXIX.—The Three Witnesses.

"For there are three [that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one. And there are three] that bear witness [on earth], the spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one" (1 John v. 7, 8).

It is well known to very many of you that, by the consent of the best critics of all religious denominations, a part of this passage is pronounced to be spurious. The agreement on that subject, if not absolutely universal, is yet so far complete, that the question may be fairly considered as decided. The words, as there is the most convincing reason to believe they came from the pen or dictation of the apostle John, stand thus: "For there are three that bear witness, the spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one." And for this reading there is the proof of the omission of the rest by all manuscripts, all versions, and all commentaries, of such antiquity and character as to make their evidence important.

Although it is only in the recent period in which biblical criticism has been brought to comparative perfection that this general consent has obtained as to the spuriousness of this seeming declaration of the Trinity, yet a strong sus-

picion has existed on the subject from the time of the Reformation, and our old English Bibles have that part printed in a different character, or enclosed in brackets. It is much to be regretted that the constitution or the spirit of the Established Church should be such as to create any difficulty about the omission from the common version of words which are so notoriously devoid of any right to be there; of words which are thus held forth to the ignorant as the words of the apostle, while they are only those of some fraudulent ecclesiastic; of words which too many who ought to know better, and some who do know better, sometimes employ disingenuously or perniciously; of words which are interpreted to convey a doctrine which deserves the stigma of false doctrine, is no part of Christianity, nor consistent with Christianity, and only tends to bring confusion into its doctrines, disgrace upon its character, and prejudice against its reception.

My present purpose is to illustrate the meaning of the genuine words of the apostle, which convey a very interesting and important view of the evidences of the gospel. They are a summary of the testimony by which Christianity was established in the world. "For there are three that bear witness, the spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one."

There is an allusion in these words to the mingled water and blood which flowed from the wound given to our Lord as he hung upon the cross. The beloved disciple was present then: "he that saw it bare record, and his record is true;" and besides the personal interest with which he would advert to the fact, it had been rendered important by subsequent opinions and controversies. The occurrence was decisive of the reality of his death, of his not having merely fainted on the cross. It showed that the spear had pierced to the vital parts, to the region of the heart. The fact was not reconcilable with the notion of Christ's having only died in appearance, as urged either by the sceptic to discredit the resurrection, or by the wild speculators who aimed, by their theories about his nature and person, to get rid of the opprobrium of being the disciples of a crucified man. But there was much more than this allusion in the mind of the writer. The "spirit" is, in New-Testament phraseology, and in this connection, the power of working

miracles. Christ thus proved his divine mission; and the same kind of testimony was borne, through the agency of his apostles and disciples, to a large extent, and with great effect. The water and the blood which flowed from his side were, together with that spirit with which he was anointed, and which accompanied his crucifixion with signs of divine power, emblematical of the agencies by which his gospel was confirmed and established. The epistle is of a late date. It was probably not written till about forty years after the resurrection of Christ. The interval had been an eventful one. The gospel had been severely tried and strongly confirmed. There had been the witness of the spirit; miracles had been wrought, and that abundantly. Numerous converts had been made, and baptised with water, according to the practice of the time and country. Their conversion and profession, expressed by that baptismal water, were a strong confirmation of the gospel. And this, I think, is the second evidence appealed to by the apostle. The water of baptism, *i. e.* the conversion and Christian profession of such numbers, under the circumstances which then existed, was an argument which might well rank even with miraculous testimony. Moreover, in that long interval, there had not only been miracle and conversion, but martyrdom. This began to be but too common. "Bearing witness" and "suffering martyrdom" were becoming two meanings of one and the same word; a striking and fearful fact in the history of language. The blood thus spilt was not spilt in vain. As to the primitive martyrs, it was powerful evidence of the reality of the gospel facts. It was a blood which bore witness, and its testimony agreed with that of miracle and conversion, the spirit and the water. This, then, I take to be the apostle's third proof. He meant that blood which was afterwards called the seed of the church, when its tendency to prove the truth and power of Christianity had passed into the actual fact of its so affecting men's minds and hearts as to make them proselytes of their victims.

We have here, then, the three great and consentient kinds of proof to which the Christian revelation originally appealed—the miracles wrought for its confirmation; the conversions effected by its influence; and the martyrdom which vast numbers of its professors endured so unshrink-

ingly: "the spirit, the water, and the blood, which agree in one."

The spirit bore testimony. The usual meaning of that word in the New Testament is miraculous power. It sometimes stands for the energy or influence of God, but more frequently for that particular kind of energy or influence. Christ wrought miracles with the power directly committed to him by the Deity; the apostles, with the power which he invoked for them, and in his name; and the disciples, with power invoked on them by the apostles. With these last it appears to have ceased, and to have been withdrawn from the world, its proper object being then accomplished. To those who witnessed an indubitable miracle, it must, unless strong prejudice blinded their minds, have been a striking and convincing proof. The scripture miracles still are; and that on account of a peculiarity which distinguishes them from all others. They are not isolated and unmeaning wonders. Such are scarcely capable of proof to a remote generation. Their evidence is constantly diminishing. It wears out with removal from the means of full investigation. They rest solely on external testimony. The scripture miracles have inherent evidence. They are not isolated, not unmeaning: they are parts of an extensive system; too extensive to be the work of chance, of collusion, or of human contrivance. They all bear on the display, confirmation, or extension of two great religious principles—God's moral government, and man's immortality. They are interwoven with a variety of other means for the establishment of those principles in men's faith. They are a prominent and essential portion of that unique history which begins in the call of Abraham and the formation of the Israelitish polity, and ends in the dissolution of that polity by the destruction of Jerusalem. They constitute the substance of divine revelation, of which the rest of the scripture is the elucidation, history, proof, commentary, or application. They are a system so large, so multifarious, so long continued, so widely spread, so harmonious, so worthy of divine power and wisdom, and so fraught with light and blessedness to humanity, as to render it absurd to compare with them the records of vulgar wonders. They are self-evidential, and bear, even to us, at this distance of time and place, a convincing testimony, the

witness of the spirit, commending itself to our spirits, and commanding the full assent and accordance of our judgment.

The water bore testimony. On whatever account the apostles practised it,—as matter of institution, local and temporary, or lasting; or as matter of custom merely,—still baptism with water was, in consequence of their practice, synonymous for that period with proselytism to, and profession of, Christianity. Now in Jerusalem, where Christ had taught, and where he had been condemned to the cross, thousands were baptised within a very short time after his resurrection. Was not that evidence? Priests and persecutors submitted to the rite, and became the disciples or coadjutors of those to whom their temporal interests, their feelings of pride or consistency, their prejudices of class or character, would have made them determined enemies; and was not that evidence? Enlightened Gentiles, men of station, of superior mind and character, men previously distinguished for knowledge, candour, and piety, Roman centurions, a proconsul, a member of the court of Areopagus at Athens, were baptised; and was not that evidence? By baptism the disciples of John acknowledged a greater than their Master; the subjects of Moses a higher legislator; the inhabitants of Samaria a Jewish Messiah; and was not that evidence? In this rite, thousands after thousands washed off, as impure and polluting, the religion of their ancestors and of their country, of their own early education, of their friends, associates, and families; and was not that evidence? The spread of primitive Christianity, considering its rapidity, the number and different descriptions of its converts, and the interests, prejudices, passions, and worldly difficulties of almost every kind with which it had to struggle, is a problem only to be solved by its truth and divinity. The witness of the water of baptism, thus applied, is a conclusive testimony on behalf of Christ and Christianity.

Blood bore testimony. The noble army of martyrs fought a good fight, and their death was truth's victory. I refer to the martyrs of the first age of Christianity; to those who were, I presume, in the mind of the apostle; those who had themselves beheld miracles. They died to attest, not their mental conviction of speculations, but their

knowledge of facts; not what they had received by hearsay, but what they had seen with their own eyes. Thanks to the prison, the stake, the scaffold, and the cross, for the high and lasting worth of their testimony. Their blood cried from the ground with a voice, not only for God, but for man, to hear. Even to our ears it proclaims their sincerity, and by that the gospel's truth. Yet louder speaks that of the apostles, the personal witnesses to a risen Saviour, who, in that faith, gave up earth for a heaven which, unless he actually rose, had for them no existence. Most precious of all was the blood of his cross, shed under circumstances which give alike to his character the highest elevation of human virtue, and to his doctrine the strongest evidence of divine truth.

These several kinds of truth agree in one conclusion, bringing it, separately and conjointly, home to our minds with the force of conviction; and not only so, but we may observe that, besides their agreement in that confirmatory tendency, they harmonise with each other, and with the spirit of the gospel to which they testify, in the advancement of those spiritual and moral purposes for which revelation was given of God to humankind; they agree in that one object which is contemplated in all nature, and Providence, and grace,—the raising of the human soul into the moral image of its Maker and Father, the perfect and blessed God.

They promote that object inasmuch as they are an exhibition of the majesty of God, whom they display as the Lord of the material and moral world; revealing his glory for all flesh to see, and to bow before in filial adoration, and constraining to observe the gospel precept, to love him with all the heart and soul, the mind and strength. Every miracle that was wrought proclaimed his supremacy over the laws of nature, showing their existence to be only the work of his power and the fiat of his will. Conversion showed him the master of the human heart, opening it for the reception of that truth which he commanded to arise and enter and take possession. Martyrdom magnified his supporting and exalting grace, by which, in meekness, patience, and immortal hope, the sufferer was glorified. "The Lord he is God alone," proclaimed those miracles, those conversions, those martyrdoms, with consentient voice. "He ruleth over

all the nations" was their testimony; for here was a power exerted, a blessing received, and a holy consistency displayed, by Jew and Gentile, the civilised and the barbarian; all bestowed with a parent's love and a parent's impartiality. They declared him the God "of the living and of the dead;" the Author of immortality to humankind by the resurrection of the man Christ Jesus. They showed his power; for here were wonders which no human art can imitate, no created energy can rival. They showed his wisdom; for here were predictions fulfilled which had been announced in remote ages; and distant and discordant elements were made to work together for the accomplishment of his plans. They showed his Almighty mercy; for here were sinners pardoned and purified; raised from moral death to spiritual life, and made the sons of God. They showed his universal and eternal love; for here was the world which he originally formed created anew in Christ Jesus, unto love and good works; and the rising of that sun of truth and righteousness which shall never set, but shine on with everlasting splendour. Here, then, is the object of the gospel answered by the evidences of the gospel. The Christian revelation of the Divine character beams out even into the atmosphere of evidence around it, and the witnesses brought forward to prove its truth are themselves instances of the benignity, the purity, the divinity of its spirit.

These topics of evidence agree also in the promotion of the gospel by the development which they afford of holy and illustrious example for our imitation.

There is a lesson of forbearance, of contentment under privation, of the sacredness of a trust, of dependence upon God in the path of duty, in the history of scripture miracles, the spirit of which may well and wisely be transferred to private life. Who of those to whom it was intrusted thought of abusing that power to the promotion of their own advantage, the supply of their necessities, or the liberation of their persons from danger or from death? When Christ had fasted forty days in the wilderness, he dallied not with the temptation of turning the stones into bread to appease his hunger. When Simon Magus wanted to purchase the power, the indignant reply of the apostle Peter was, "Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money."

To raise Lazarus from the grave, power was exerted by Christ; to avoid the cross, or descend from the cross himself, it was not exerted. And such is the spirit of that wondrous history; the Christian spirit of truth and fidelity, on which confidence may repose secure and calm; as Christ was, when he slumbered in the ship which the tempest was tossing; while the feeble were frightened, and the winds and waves were raging, and above and around was darkness; the Christian spirit, which employs for man the power of beneficence it has received from God, gives such as it has, does what it can, rejoices in being instrumental to others' good, even though it be a good denied to its own realisation; and deserves to be the object, as it exists by the exercise, of a profound and unalterable trust.

Conversion and profession, here typified by the water of baptism, in their scriptural record afford noble examples of a candid mind in the reception of truth, and of manliness, consistency, and activity in its profession. To take only the apostle Paul for instance. How many opinions he had to change; what prejudices were to be overcome; on how many points he had to say, first to himself and afterwards to the world, I was wrong; I thought wrong; I acted wrong! And he did say it. What prospects he had to renounce; what difficulties to encounter; what taunts and insults and persecutions from his old associates; frequently what coldness and suspicions from his new associates! What a life of trial and labour he had to commence and persevere in! Does not the record bear witness to us of the practicability of a state of mind which we cannot but reverence; and towards which, as far as there is occasion, we should aspire? Oh! for more of this love of truth; a love of truth which triumphs over the fear of man, and the ambition of singularity, and the folly of fashion, and the spirit of party, and the engrossing tendency of worldly pursuits, and the dissipating tendency of worldly pleasures, and the snares of wealth, and the apprehension of poverty, and the thirst of novelty, and the adhesiveness of bigotry, and the love of ease, and the ebullitions of intemperance; and through them all, and before them all, bears on the mind in the straightforward path of simplicity, sincerity, and consistent activity, making it strong in the faith which overcometh the world.

The prospect and the endurance of martyrdom called forth feelings whose record cannot fail to reach our hearts. The apostle Peter felt the approach of his predicted sufferings a stimulus to holy exertion. "Yea, I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up by putting you in remembrance; knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath showed me." We have Paul's example, the recorded expression of his emotions in the prospect of martyrdom: "I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness." We have the narrative of Stephen's death; commending his spirit to his risen Master, and praying God to forgive his murderers. And we have that from which this loveliness of theirs emanated—the death of Christ, in all the moral beauty of its disinterestedness, its affectionateness, its mercy, and its filial piety. And well do these concur with the didactic teachings of the New Testament to prepare us for that solemn event, coming not to us in the shape of persecuting violence, but still *death*, however it may come; still to be endured in that self-same spirit. The Christian's heart beats for others to the last. He would leave the world better than he found it; and his love blesses in death, as it did in life. Forgiveness to others, and for himself, is on his lips and in his heart. He looks back to his conflicts; forwards to his crown; and upwards to his God and Father, into whose hands he commends his spirit. He departs this life to inherit immortality, and join that countless and blessed throng who, in their witness, all agree in one, one song of eternal thanksgiving.

Finally, the gospel is a system of power, of redeeming and regenerating power; and of this power, the miracles, the conversions, the martyrdoms, of the early age of Christianity were the exercise, the demonstration, the exhibition: there was in them the power, to which, in that, they bore convincing testimony. Physical power, even to the apparent suspension of the laws of nature; moral power, in the transformation of opinions, feelings, habits, which had become hereditary and universal, and occupied the soul of man beyond all strength, save that of its Maker, to dis-

lodge; and the combination of both physical and moral power, the one generated by the other, which, fettered in a dungeon, sang its hymn of thankfulness; which spoke to its persecutors' hearts, in holy calmness and kindness, while on the torturing rack; and smiled in the very instant of dissolution.

This was the power which changed the world—the power which took of the rough and rude material of Jewish character, with its ignorance, and its insolence, and its prejudices, and its narrowness, and its antipathies, and its grovellings, and formed out of it those heavenly-minded messengers, teachers of all nations, who proclaimed the spirituality of piety, and the paternity of God, and the abolition of distinctions, and the law of love, and the immortality of man, and the redemption of the world. The power which cast down the bigotry of nation, by which Jew and Roman hated; and the bigotry of religion, by which Jew and Samaritan hated; and the bigotry of race, by which all Gentiles and Jews hated; and levelling these, and a thousand other antipathies, made all one in Christ Jesus. The power which, when the whole world was wallowing in wickedness,—a brutal sensuality at one extreme, and a sordid hypocrisy at the other; what was called religion, here nothing but pride, and there nothing but pollution,—said, "Let there be light, and there was light," the light of truth and purity, a people whose motto was holiness to the Lord, adorning their profession by love and good works. The power which crushed idolatry, even though supported by the imperial throne, and abolished its sacrifices, and overturned its altars, and cleansed out its temples, and dethroned its gods, and made the mythology of Rome and Greece an exploded fiction. The power which, though through the night of the dark ages it seemed extinct or dormant, showed, when the time of reformation came, that it was inherent in the gospel, and broke the sceptre of corruption, as it had broken that of idolatry, and awoke from slumber, as a strong man to run a race; or as a giant to trample on opposing hosts in the march of its resistless might. The power which even now is sending forth principles, and modifying or remodelling institutions, and enlightening and strengthening opinion, and elevating human character, and increasing human happiness, and

preparing the kingdoms of this world to become the kingdoms of our God and of his Christ. The power which works not less mightily on the individual than on the multitude; which takes man, with his infirmities, his errors, his sins, and his depravity, and casts him into the mould of Christian doctrine, and breathes into him the spirit of Christian vitality, till he becomes a living soul in the image of his God, the brother of Christ, the heir of heaven, the partaker of a divine nature, who here is good and does good, and hereafter is filled unto all the fulness of God, of God the infinitely and eternally blessed. The power which God grant that, through Christ Jesus, our hearts may feel, and our characters and lives display. Amen.

Sermon XL.—The Ascension of Christ.

"And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven" (Luke xxiv. 51).

Few things are more generally disappointing to the youthful reader, especially when experience has not yet taught what he ought to expect, than the conclusions of true histories. In narratives which are the produce of invention, the end crowns the work. The different emotions which have been excited by the supposed course of events are artfully combined and adjusted, for the purpose of giving full force to the final impression. The various characters are consigned, usually, to a retribution which commends itself to the moral feelings of the reader, and leaves his mind satisfied. The vicissitudes which have engaged his attention are represented as subsiding into a permanent state of things, on which even imagination drops the curtain as an appropriate closing scene. But it is very different in real history. The tale of celebrated nations, or celebrated individuals, has not its beginning, its middle, and its end, like the poem, the novel, or the drama; nor can it be constructed on the principles by which they are usually regulated. This is one great reason why the reader of fiction, unless the mind be disciplined by other occupations, cannot relish history. Events will not come in the order which he wants; heroes are absent when

they should interpose, are vanquished when they should conquer, die when they should live, or live when they should die; and there is no such gradation of interest, and harmonious tendency of every part towards the production of the catastrophe, as his mind has been accustomed to, and for which it craves. Nor can it be otherwise; for the concerns of all countries are entangled and involved in those of other countries; they are continually violating poetical unity; they have no distinctness or separability; the interest fluctuates; it sinks here, it rises there; and the most perfect history is but a dislocated fragment. It is a chapter torn away from the universal history of man to which it belongs. From that it cannot be completely parted at its commencement; with that it must be continually intertwining as it proceeds; and in that it finally merges: while that, being yet in its progress, perhaps in an early stage of its progress, is only susceptible of a still more unsatisfactory pause in the narrative.

We might, I think, argue from the nature of the case, that it would be different with a divine revelation. The views which are taken of humankind being those of Him to whom all things are at once present; the facts which are recorded being those of a connected series of supernatural interpositions, designed for general contemplation and study,—we might anticipate that they would combine the satisfactory evidence by which history is authenticated with the regularity of construction by which fiction is distinguished; that there would be, in a peculiar degree, a marked beginning, an isolated progress, and a full and satisfactory close. And this is the case both with the views and with the facts of scripture.

As to its general views, plan, or system, it presents the full portrait of human destiny, from the dawn of creation to the consummation of all things. It begins before the first man began to live, and its predictions pause not till after that period when death itself shall die. The topics of its divisions are creation, instruction, transgression, forbearance, redemption, death, resurrection, judgment, and restoration. Its first scene is the chaos from which the heavens and earth were moulded; its last, the new heavens and earth, wherein dwell righteousness, peace, joy, mutual affection, and devout thanksgiving. Its opening chorus is that

of angels responding to the Almighty fiat, "Let there be light," "when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy;" and its conclusion, the thundering peal of the final anthem of all intelligences, ascribing "Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, unto Him that sitteth on the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever." A conclusion worthy of the subject in all its magnificence.

And if we turn from these general views to the particular facts of revelation, we shall find the same coherence and completeness. The commencement of the supernatural interpositions which constitute revelation was in the call of Abraham. There began the peculiar dispensations of heaven. The next stage of the progress was the deliverance of the Israelites, and the giving of the law. The individual patriarch had become a people; and that people was put on its probation. Then came the trial, through the diversified ministry of the prophets. Christ came; their Messiah, and the world's life. They rejected him, and persecuted his followers; and this eventful history of wonders had its appropriate close in the destruction of the Jewish polity, the termination of miraculous interferences, the abolition of distinctions and privileges, and thereby the foundation of that kingdom which cannot be moved, which is spiritual and universal.

And the history and ministry of Christ,—so strange and yet so true; so grand and yet so touching; with so much of diversity in the details, and yet so perfect a unity of spirit and tendency,—these have their appropriate, beautiful, and soul-satisfying completion in the miracle of the ascension. It is the one becoming conclusion of such a history.

Besides this poetical, but not imaginary, fitness, there was on other accounts a propriety in the intercourse of our Lord with his disciples and the world being brought to a public termination. It was desirable, both as to them and as to their converts in after ages. It was important for them. To have been constantly looking for the repetition of such intercourse as they had enjoyed, during the forty days, with the risen Saviour, would have tended to divert their minds from, and disqualify them for, the great work to which they were called. They would have been looking, longing, and lingering for those blessed visitations,

when they should only have had at heart the converting of men to faith in his religion, and have felt that, by labouring and suffering, to spread the gospel among the nations was their only work and joy on earth. They would have remained too much in a state of personal dependence upon him. Unless he had been ever with them, their hearts would have failed; and if he had, it would have been a prolongation of his ministry to the exclusion of theirs. It was better, far better, for them to know that they should see him no more till he received them to glory. The miracle of the ascension is important to us, and to all Christians. It marks at once to our minds the completion of Christ's work. It fills up the measure of fact on which apostolic testimony has to bear. It simplifies the subject; which would else have been entangled and confused, after the dispersion of the apostles, by statements not resting on their joint testimony; and where discrimination would have been difficult. And it perfects the moral lesson of the history of Christ. It crowns the narrative of his obedience and sufferings with that of his recompense; and having seen his trials, and gone with him to Calvary, we trace his steps to the very portals of the celestial mansion where he is enthroned on the right hand of the Majesty on high. Yes, it was a fitting conclusion; and easily may we trace, in the several particulars, its propriety and beauty.

We trace them in the locality of this parting miracle. It was not the village of Bethany, but the district, which was a part of the Mount of Olives. Dr. Clarke speaks in terms of admiration of the commanding view from this spot. All Jerusalem is at the gazer's feet; on the south the prospect stretches away to the Dead Sea; and on the north "are seen the verdant and fertile pastures of the plains of Jericho, watered by the Jordan, whose course may be distinctly discerned." Here, then, as the apostles surrounded their Master's person, they had before them the scenery of the most interesting and affecting portions of his life and ministry. From his birth to his baptism; from his baptism to his preaching and miracles; from them to his death and resurrection,—the visible, material emblems of all were there; places and objects never to be dissociated from those recollections. Jerusalem's towers and Jericho's plains; Kedron's brook and Jordan's river; Gethsemane's garden

and Calvary's mount;—all were there, with their imperishable records, presenting to the minds of the apostles at once the amount and extent of the works and sufferings of him whom they were now to lose: all there, as if to remind him who was now the inheritor of heaven what he had been to earth, and earth to him; there, as if they would have their farewell too, and share in his parting blessing, and receive in it a consecration which should hallow them to men's minds through all coming generations. It is a pretty legend of the early Catholic ages, that a chapel being built on the spot from which Christ ascended, it was found impossible either to pave the place on which he last stood, and where the prints of his feet remained, or to close in the roof immediately over that place, and which was the path of his ascent. The legend obviously originated in allegory. The traces of Christ's steps on earth can never be obliterated by human art, and the path of his ascent to heaven must ever be open to the aspirations of his disciples. Rich and precious were legendary lore if its tales always taught lessons so beautiful and true.

On that mountain had Solomon, in the days of his degeneracy, built idolatrous temples. It was thence called the Mount of Corruption. There, where the royal philosopher had stood to transgress, should the peasant preacher of truth and righteousness stand to be glorified. There had Solomon, the idolater of numerous false and evil deities, fallen; and thence should Christ, the worshiper of the one true God, the God of love, ascend. Mount of Olives!—the true whose branch is the symbol of peace,—thence should part from earth for heaven the Prince of Peace, the Reconciler of all things.

It was while Christ blessed them that he was parted from them. So indeed it must have been at any time, for he was ever blessing them. Had it been while he was calling them to follow him; summoning them from earthly to spiritual occupations; taking them out of the world, or the wilderness, into his own safe, pure, and happy fold; making them kings and priests unto God: had it been while healing sicknesses and bearing away diseases; dispensing, among the victims of every kind of human grief, to each the appropriate miracle of mercy; restoring sight to the blind, reason to the maniac, and life to the dead;

had it been while he was speaking the words of truth and life, grace on his lips, and God's own spirit in his doctrines; had it been while he was enduring the contradiction of sinners, the despising and rejecting of men; while his enemies were clamouring against him, and he was praying for them; while priests were scorning, and friends were flying, and his blood was flowing,—it would still have been the fact, that while he blessed them he was parted from them. For his life was one long blessing.

The assertion would have been true of the whole interview which thus terminated, as well as of its closing act. He was removing their yet lingering prejudice in favour of a Jewish and temporal kingdom, and giving them the promise of that outpouring of the spirit which, on the day of Pentecost, visited them with miraculous power, raised them into moral dignity, and sent them forth heaven's authorised heralds of the world's regeneration.

But it was well that, in the literal sense of the expression, they should thus part. That benediction well became the relation which they bore, breathing the dignity of the prophet, the care of the teacher, and the affection of the man. Thus should Christ leave his apostles; thus Jesus of Nazareth part from his companions, friends, and brethren; and go, with all the tenderness of his human heart unchanged, to heaven.

This mode of withdrawing Christ from intercourse with his disciples was appropriate, because it was miraculous. It might not be beyond the powers of his immortal nature; but those powers are themselves miraculous to us. And it was fitting that such a ministry as his,—miraculous in his designation to it; miraculous in the whole course of its progress; miraculous in the apostolic commissions which emanated from it; miraculous in that great event, his own resurrection, the exhibition of his doctrine of man's immortality,—should conclude with such a miracle as the ascension. Its ceasing by an event in the ordinary course of things would have been an unworthy close. As it is, in the perusal of the record, our minds rise and ascend with the Son of Man, who is the subject of it, till they rest with him in the bosom of the Eternal.

It has sometimes been objected to this miracle that it is unphilosophical; that it is unaccordant with the New-

tonian philosophy, the globular form of the earth, the plurality of worlds, the extension of the universe, and the presumed non-existence of any such local heaven above us as the ancient Jews and many modern Christians believe in. But I reply, that the non-existence of a local heaven, however probable, is only presumed; and that its existence or non-existence, and the Newtonian philosophy, &c., are quite beside the question; for the fact witnessed by the apostles was simply this, that Christ ascended into the air, till he became invisible to their eyes; and according to their phraseology and notions, he was then in heaven; and so he was, on any theory, whether heaven be a place or only a state—the narrative determines nothing as to that question; but whether it be either, or both, he was and is there; and that is sufficient. The fact is clear, whatever becomes of the speculation; nor does it interfere with the decision of that speculation.

If a miracle be the proper conclusion of Christ's ministry, this was the most appropriate of all miracles. The lesson of his life was thus perfected. Here is a man born in obscurity and poverty, but showing from his earliest years a singular goodness, devotion, and identification of spirit with the word of God. Coming to the baptism of one whom his country recognises as a prophet, he is distinguished and set apart by a voice from heaven. He is assailed by sore temptations, but they stain not his purity nor mislead his zeal. In an age of bigotry and fanaticism, he proclaims the universal love of God and brotherhood of man. In an age of superstition, he tramples ceremony in the dust to elevate righteousness. Amid votaries of this world, he declares man's immortality. He shows the divine origin of his commission by mighty miracles, and its beneficent spirit by their benevolent nature. He is rejected and put to death; and while his foes are yet flushed with triumph, he revives and reappears. He is the same; but his earthly is become a spiritual body, and he belongs to the world of life and glory. After sufficient communication with his disciples to prepare them for enlightening the world, he and they are formally and finally parted by his ascending into the air, to be seen no more. Does not this record teach us a God—his power and love; a Providence; a future state; the necessity of righteousness to happiness; and in what that

happiness consists? Does not this exhibition of one so good, so beneficent to mankind, so cruelly persecuted by his countrymen, so seemingly abandoned of heaven, yet at last so gloriously delivered and exalted, preach more persuasively and powerfully to our hearts than could any words; drawing us with cords of love; breathing into us the spirit of Christ; animating us in exertion; calming us in affliction; elevating us in devotion; enabling us to mount as on eagles' wings, to run without weariness and walk without fainting, till at length we track the steps of our elder brother to our Father's house, and are welcomed by him to one of its many mansions?

This history of Christ is the exhibition of human destiny. It is a divine revelation to us of our nature, duties, and prospects; of the government of God under which we live, and of the heaven to which we may hope to ascend at death. Let us learn from it so to copy Christ in our lives, as that, in relation to all with whom we have to do, when the time of separation shall arrive, it may be in blessing them that we are parted from them. This is to live in love, which is to dwell in God. This is the spirit in which good men of old went up to the temple of the Lord, and in which we shall go up to the heaven of his presence. "Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord; or who shall stand in his holy place? He that hath clean hands and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully. He shall receive the blessing from the Lord, and righteousness from the God of his salvation."

Heavenly messengers declared to the apostles that Christ should come again, and again he did come in that awful event which glorified his character, abolished the peculiarity of Judaism, and sent over the world the knowledge of our paternal God. And again he cometh in the triumphs of his gospel, for which Providence is already marshalling the way, when knowledge shall abound, and truth prevail, and earth's kingdoms own his spiritual and benignant sceptre. He cometh in that summons which all in their graves hear, or shall hear, and which calls them forth to impartial retribution. And, finally, he will come in the great closing scene of the gospel plan, the consummation of redeeming love, when every knee shall bow in his name, and confess him Lord, to the glory of the Father.

Wherever be the locality of heaven; or be it, as is most probable, a state in which those who exist may tenant any place, free denizens of God's unbounded universe,—to be in heaven is to be with Christ and like Christ. In the resurrection, whether that speedily follow death in every individual, or be one general revival, he may be said to come and take us to himself, that where he is we may be also. Our vile bodies shall be transformed into the likeness of his glorious body. Sown in corruption, they shall be raised in incorruption; sown in dishonour, they shall be raised in glory; sown in weakness, they shall be raised in power; sown natural bodies, they shall be raised spiritual bodies; and so this mortal shall put on immortality. This is, to us, the coming again of Christ. And with spirits strong in faith, when the warning voice of age or of disease shall tell us that he is coming quickly, may our hearts respond, "Amen; even so come, Lord Jesus!"

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